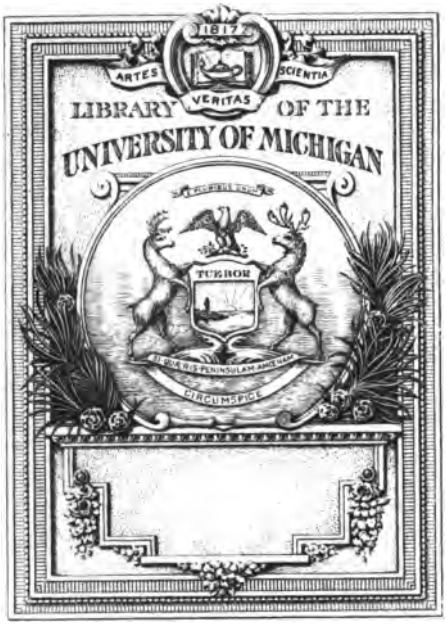
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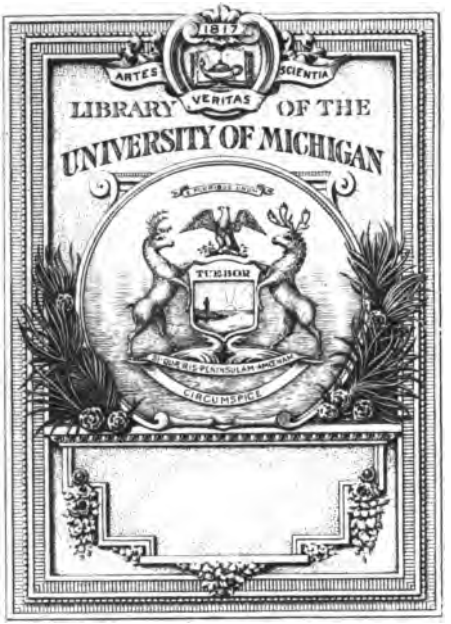
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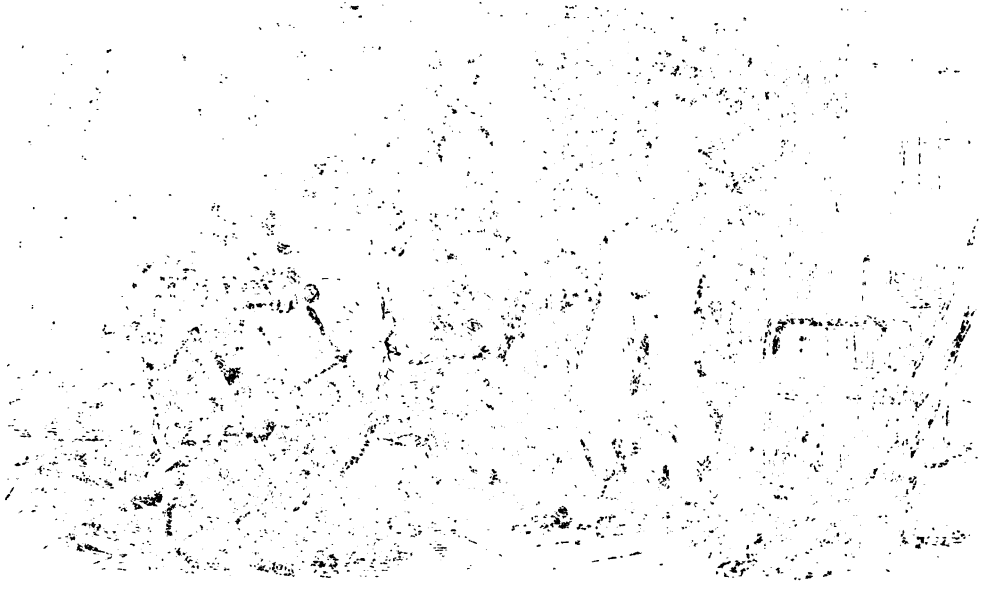

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TOM NEWCOMBE;

OR,

THE BOY OF BAD HABITS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE GUN-BOAT SERIES," "THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SERIES," ETC.

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CONTENTS.

TOM NEWCOMBE;

OR,

THE BOY OF BAD HABITS.

CHAPTER I.

TOM'S HABITS.

"  NOW, I can't learn this lesson, I know I can't, and there's no use in trying! I am the most unlucky boy in the whole world!"

Thus spoke Tom Newcombe, as he lay under one of the trees in his father's yard, rolling about on the grass, and tossing his heels in the air, as if he scarcely knew what to do with himself.

Tom was not a happy boy, although all his playmates thought he ought to be. His father was the wealthiest man in the village—owned more than half the vessels that sailed from that port, and Tom lived in a large house, where he had every thing a boy of his age could ask for to make his life pass pleasantly. He owned the swiftest sail-boat about the village; had more fish-poles, foot-balls, and playthings of every description than he could possibly find use for; and, in

the stable, was a fine little Shetland pony, which had been bought for Tom's express benefit. But, in spite of his pleasant surroundings, the hero of our story was very discontented; his face always wore a gloomy expression, and he invariably acted as if he were angry about something.

Tom was about fourteen years of age, as smart as any boy in the village, and might have been of some use in the world, had it not been for his numerous bad habits, which kept him in constant trouble, and were the sole cause of all his unhappiness. One of these bad habits was carelessness. He thought it was too much trouble to carry out the motto he had so often heard—"A place for every thing and every thing in its place"—and the consequence was, he was not unfrequently compelled to waste half the day in searching for some article he happened to want. His cap, especially, was the source of a great deal of annoyance and vexation to him. For example, when he came in to his meals, he would take off his cap on entering the house, and throw it somewhere, not caring where it landed; and as soon as he was ready to go out of doors again, his first question—spoken in a slow, drawling tone, as if he were almost ready to drop down with fatigue—would be:

"Now, mother, where's my cap?"

"I am sure I don't know, my son," would be the answer. "What did you do with it when you came in?"

"I hung it right here!" Tom would say, pointing to the hat-rack in the hall, or to a nail behind the door, which had been placed there for his especial benefit.

"I know I hung it up, but it isn't here now. I do wish folks would let my things alone! Something's always bothering me!"

Then Tom would begin a search in all the rooms of the house, tumbling chairs about and moving tables and sofas, and the missing article would be found, sometimes in the "play-house," sometimes under the bed, but more frequently under the trees in the yard, or on the portico.

We have spoken of Tom's "play-house." It was a room in the attic, nicely furnished, with carpet, tables, and chairs, and provided with a stove, so that he could be comfortable there in cold weather. In this room he kept his playthings, or rather, part of them. Those that were lost—and about half of them were missing—would have been found, some in the barn, others scattered about the yard, while the rest had been thrown under the house for safe keeping, where Tom could not get at them without soiling his clothes, and that was something he did not like to do. To have taken a single glance at the articles in his play-house, one would have thought that he ought never to have been at a loss to know how to employ himself; and that a single glance would also have been sufficient to convince any one that he never took the least care of what was given him. The only thing that ever interested Tom for any length of time, was a fine model of a ship, with sails and ropes complete, which an old sailor had given him, and which had been placed on a stand opposite the entrance to his play-house. But, having been carelessly mounted, it had fallen to the floor, and Tom, in one of his angry moods, had kicked it under the table, where it lay with its masts broken, and its sails torn, looking very much like a vessel that

had been wrecked at sea. His playthings were scattered about the room in all directions. Foot-balls, bows and arrows, Chinese puzzles, base-ball bats, a magic lantern, models of vessels, fish poles, hats and boots were mixed up in the most complete confusion, and every article bore evidence to the fact that it had received the roughest usage. Indeed, there was but one thing in the room that was entire, and that was a little fire-engine—a birthday present from his mother. But then this had only come into Tom's possession two days before the commencement of our story, and it was yet new to him.

Tom was always complaining that he never could find a thing when he wanted it; and no one about the house wondered at it in the least. To his mother's oft-repeated inquiry why he did not put his room in order, and have a certain place for each particular thing, he would answer:

"O, now, I can't; I haven't got time. Let somebody else do it!"

Tom's room, we ought to remark, was placed in perfect order every day, but it was only time and labor wasted; for, if he happened to want a fish-pole, or a ball bat, he would tumble the things about until he found the article in question, and then go out leaving the room in the greatest confusion.

Another bad trait in Tom's character was his unconquerable pride. He was ashamed to work, and he would not do so if there was any possible way for him to avoid it. On a cold day, when it stormed too violently for him to go out of doors, he would remain in his room, with benumbed hands and chattering teeth, before he would take the trouble to build a fire. His father often

asked him why he stayed there in the cold, and Tom replied: "O, there's no wood up here!"

"Well, you know where the wood-shed is. Go and get some."

"O, I can't," Tom would invariably answer. "Let somebody else go. It would n't look well for me to do it."

Once or twice during the previous winter, for some offense that he had committed, he was compelled to remove the snow from the side-walk in front of the house. On these occasions, Tom, being very much afraid of soiling his gloves, handled the shovel with the ends of his fingers, and when any one passed by, he hung his head as if he did not wish to be recognized. Work of any kind was the severest punishment that could be inflicted upon him. In his estimation, it was a disgrace that never could be wiped out.

Tom also had a bad habit of saying, "O, I can't; I know I can't, and what's the use in trying?" This was his favorite expression—one that he made use of at all times, and upon all occasions. If his lesson was hard, instead of going manfully at work to learn it, he would read it over carelessly a few times; and if he failed to remember it, or if he found it more difficult than he had expected, he would throw down his book, exclaiming: "O, I can't get it. It's too hard. Something's always bothering me;" and that was the end of it as far as he was concerned.

"Tom," his father would say, when he heard the boy make use of this expression, "do n't you remember the words of the old song, 'If at first you do n't succeed, try—'"

But Tom, as soon as he found out what was coming, would interrupt him with—

"O, now, father, that's all useless. What good does it do a fellow to try, when he *knows* he can't succeed? It's only time wasted. I'm quite sure the person who wrote that song never had any very hard things to do."

At school, Tom never made any progress. Promised rewards or threatened punishments seldom had any lasting effect on him, and the result was, that all the boys of his age in the village soon left him far behind. He disliked very much to be beaten, and always wanted to be first in every thing; but even this failed to arouse him, and, as his school-mates termed it, he was "promoted backward," until, at last, he found himself in a class with boys who were much younger than himself, but who, in spite of the difference in their ages, always had their lessons better than he. Finally, Mr. Newcombe, almost discouraged, took Tom out of school, and placed him under the charge of a private teacher, who lived at the mansion. When this change was made, Tom looked upon himself as a most fortunate boy; but he soon discovered a very disagreeable feature in the arrangement, and that was, his father was always in the school-room when he recited his lessons. This made Tom very uneasy. He did not wish to make a display of his ignorance before his father, and, besides, he knew that if the merchant took the matter into his own hands, something unpleasant would happen. On several occasions, he had assured Mr. Newcombe that he could recite his lessons much better if he were not present; but the latter, taking a different view of the case, was always at

home during the recitations, and Tom had more than once been soundly scolded for his failures.

Tom was also sadly wanting in firmness of purpose. Like many boys of his age, he looked forward with impatience to the day when he should become a man; and the question that troubled him not a little, was, what should he do when he became his "own master," as he termed it. He was full of what he considered to be glorious ideas, but, when he had determined to enter upon any particular calling, he always found something unpleasant in it. For instance, during the previous winter he had informed his father that it was his intention to become a sailor, and that nothing could induce him to change his mind. As usual with him, he wanted to begin at once, and he scarcely allowed his father a moment's rest, teasing him from morning until night, for permission to go to sea on one of the vessels as cabin-boy. But Mr. Newcombe, who had once been a cabin-boy himself, and who knew what Tom would be compelled to endure, would not give his consent. He was not at all opposed to his son's going to sea, for, having been a sailor himself, he looked upon a sea-faring man as a most useful and honorable member of society; but he knew that on ship-board, Tom's uneasy, discontented disposition would keep him in constant trouble; and before he allowed him out of his sight he wanted him to abandon his bad habits. Besides, he did not wish his son to remain a foremast hand all his life, and he knew that if Tom wished to win promotion, he must first go to school and pay more attention to his books. So Mr. Newcombe told Tom that he could not go, and this made the boy very miserable indeed. Several of

his playmates, who were much younger than himself, had been to sea on three or four voyages, and why could n't he go as well as any body? He could see no good reason for a refusal, and in order to punish his father for not allowing him to have his own way, he went into the sulks, and, for a day or two, scarcely spoke to any one. This was Tom's favorite way of taking revenge on his father and mother, and no doubt it was the source of great satisfaction to him. But had he known how foolish he was, and how all the sensible boys of his acquaintance laughed at him, he might have taken some pains to conceal his ugly temper. He resolved that he would never abandon his idea of becoming a sailor, and every moment that he could snatch from school, was spent on the wharf, where he stood looking at the vessels, and wishing that he was his "own master," so that he could do as he pleased. One night he took his stand on the wharf, and saw one of his father's vessels towed into the harbor almost a wreck. Her foremast was gone, her deck and shrouds were coated with ice, her rigging all frozen, the sails useless, and those of the crew that were left, were in the most pitiable condition. This was an incident in the life of a sailor that had never entered into Tom's calculations; and when he had seen the vessel moored at the wharf, and heard her captain tell his father that the crew, besides being badly frost-bitten, had been without food for two days, Tom started homeward, fully resolved that he would never follow the sea.

For a day or two after that, he was a most miserable boy. He did not know what to decide upon next; and he never was happy unless he had something to dream

about. But, one afternoon, as he stood in his father's office, a well-to-do farmer drove up with a load of grain, and Tom suddenly saw the way out of his quandary. There were four horses hitched to the sled, and they were so slick and fat, and the farmer seemed to be so happy and contented, that Tom could not resist the thought that he would like to be a farmer. In fact, after a few moment's consideration, he decided that he would be one, and he resolved to act upon his decision at once. After a little maneuvering, he commenced a conversation with the farmer, during which, he asked him if he "did n't want to hire a boy!" The man replied that he did, that he was just looking for one, and, that, if Tom would go home with him, he would soon make a first-class farmer of him. Tom, delighted with the idea, at once sought an interview with his father, to whom he hurriedly explained his new scheme. Mr. Newcombe, too busy to be interrupted, answered his request that he might be permitted to go home with the farmer in the negative; but Tom, who was a great tease, was not to be put off so easily.

"You do n't understand what I want, father!" he began.

"Yes I do!" replied the merchant. "I know all about it. But there's one thing I do n't know, and that is, what foolish notion you'll get into your head next!"

"But, father!" said Tom impatiently, "may I go? That's what I want to know!"

"No, sir, you may stay at home!"

"O, now, why can't I go?" whined Tom. "Say, father, *why* can't I go? I want to learn to be a farmer."

How long Tom would have continued to tease his

father, it is impossible to say, had not the merchant, well-nigh out of patience, ordered his son to "go home, and stay there, until he should learn not to bother persons when they were busy." Tom reluctantly obeyed; but the moment he reached the house again went into the sulks.

This last idea, he thought, would suit him much better than any thing he had ever before thought of. Heretofore, when he had explained his plans to his father, that gentleman had invariably said,

"Tom, you don't know enough! Go to school and pay more attention to your books. Get your education first, and decide upon your business afterward." But this was something the boy did not like to do. He could not bear to study, and all his calculations, as to what trade or profession he should follow when he became a man, had been made with reference to this particular object—namely, to discover some business which could be successfully conducted without a knowledge of arithmetic and geography, two things that Tom thoroughly despised. But now he had hit upon the very thing—farming; a farmer had nothing to do but drive horses, take care of cows, and spread hay; and that did not require a knowledge of arithmetic or geography. That was just the business for him; and he resolved that some day he would be a farmer.

During the remainder of the winter, Tom held firmly to this determination. He thought, and dreamed about nothing else; and a farmer's sled or wagon was an object of great curiosity to him; at least all his playmates thought so, for every morning and evening, before and after school, and all day Saturdays, Tom was seen loi-

tering about the market-houses, looking at the horses, and talking with the farmers. This state of things, we repeat, continued until spring, and then all these ideas were driven out of his head as suddenly as they had entered it.

Among other things of which the village of Newport could boast, was its military school. This institution was attended by boys of all ages, from almost all parts of the state, and, in addition to being prepared either for business or college, they were instructed in military science. The students wore a uniform of gray trimmed with blue, the "commissioned" officers being designated by shoulder-straps, and the "non-commissioned," by two or three stripes worn on the right arm, above the elbow. Every thing in and about the academy was conducted in military order. The officers were always addressed according to their rank, captain, lieutenant, or sergeant, as the case might be, and punishment for serious offenses against the rules of the school was adjudged by courts-martial, composed of some of the teachers and students. Every spring and fall the members of the academy, with their professors at their head, went into camp, where they generally remained about two weeks; and it was during one of these camping frolics that Tom, after having witnessed a series of parades, during which, the students behaved like veteran soldiers, lost all desire to become a farmer, and decided to turn his attention to the military school. Tom had often wished that his father would permit him to sign the muster-rolls of the academy, and, in fact, he had, for a long time, been unable to determine whether he was "cut out" for a soldier or a sailor. On this point he had often debated

long and earnestly. It must not be supposed that Tom was endeavoring to decide in which of these two callings he could do the most good, and be of the most use to his fellow-men! Quite the contrary. He cared for no one but himself. It made no difference to him how much others were troubled or inconvenienced, as long as he could get along smoothly; and the question he was trying to answer was, Which calling held out the better promise of a life of ease? There was another question that Tom had never been able to answer to his satisfaction, and that was, of what use would his military education be to him after he left the academy? But one day, just before the camp broke up, this problem was solved by one of the students, who informed Tom that he had passed a successful examination, and had received the appointment of cadet at West Point. This showed Tom the way out of his difficulty, and, at the same time, opened before his lively imagination a scene of glory of which he had never before dreamed.

"That's the thing for me!" he soliloquised, as he bent his steps homeward. "That's the very place I always wanted to go to. If father would let me join this school, I'd certainly be appointed captain of one of the academy companies in two or three weeks; then, after I get through there, I'd go to West Point. I'd stay there until I completed my military education, and then go into the army. Then I would be sent off somewhere to fight the Indians, and, if I was a brave man, I might be promoted to colonel or brigadier-general. Would n't that be glorious, and would n't I feel gay riding around on my fine horse, with my body-guard galloping after me? It's an easy life, too; I know it would just suit

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conjure up some plan by which he might induce his father to grant his request. He declared, more than once, that he was "bound to be a general," and that he "never would give up his idea of joining the military academy." But one day an event transpired that caused him to forget all these resolutions, and turned his thoughts and desires into another channel.

A full-rigged ship, which had been launched at the yards early in the spring, was completed, and Tom saw her start on her first voyage. He had never before seen so beautiful an object as that ship, and, as she sailed majestically out of the harbor, the thought occurred to Tom how grand he would feel if he was the master of a vessel like that. From that hour the military school was at a discount, and Tom had again resolved to be a sailor—not a common fore-mast hand, but the captain of a full-rigged ship.

These are but few of the instances that might be cited to illustrate the fact that Tom was utterly lacking in firmness of purpose, for there was scarcely a trade or profession that he had not, at some time or another, wanted to follow. For a time he imagined that a man who could build and run a steam-engine ought to be very proud, and able to make his living easily, and then he wanted to be a machinist. Then he thought that the village doctor, a fat, jolly man, who rode about in his gig, and appeared to take the world very easily, ought to be a happy man, and then Tom wanted to study medicine. Next, after listening for a few moments to a Fourth of July speech, delivered by a prominent member of the bar, he decided to be a lawyer; and, after that, a civil engineer; but, upon

inquiry, he found that all these involved a long course of study and preparation; so they were speedily dismissed as unworthy of his attention.

Tom, we repeat, had often thought of these and many other trades and professions; but, at the period when our story commences, he was, perhaps, for the hundredth time, firmly settled in his determination to become a sailor. Mr. Newcombe had often talked to his son about his bad habits, especially his want of stability, his propensity to build air-castles, and his aversion to study; but, it is needless to say, the boy paid very little attention to what was said to him. The truth was, he did not believe that his father knew any thing at all about the matter. Besides being very stubborn—holding to his own ideas, no matter what was said against them—he had a most exalted opinion of himself, and had often made himself ridiculous by saying, "They can't teach *me*—I know just what I am about."

Tom lived to be an old man; and perhaps we shall see what he thought of these things in after life; whether or not he never regretted that he had not followed the advice of those who, being older and more experienced than himself, knew what was best for him.

CHAPTER II.

THE FISHER-BOY.

THE house in which Tom lived stood on a hill that commanded a fine view of the village of Newport and the adjacent bay, and before it was a wide lawn, that sloped gently down to the water's edge, shaded by grand old trees. On the day we introduce Tom to our readers, he had been sent out of the school-room in disgrace, not having mastered his arithmetic lesson. He lay at full length under one of the trees, stretching his arms and yawning, throwing his book about, and looking out over the bay at the vessels that were sailing in and out of the harbor. Now and then he would think of his lesson, but the thought was always dismissed with an impatient "O, I can't learn it; I know I can't, and what's the use in trying?" But it was evident that he did not intend to abandon it altogether, for he would occasionally open his book and study for a few moments, with his mouth twisted on one side, as if he were on the point of crying. The fact was, Mr. Newcombe was present at the recitation that morning, when his son had made a worse failure than usual; and as he was about to leave the school-room, he turned to Tom and told him, in language too plain to be misunderstood, that if he "did n't have that lesson by five

o'clock that afternoon, he would get his jacket dusted in a way that would make him open his eyes." Tom remembered the threat, and he would now and then turn to his task with a listless, discouraged air, as if he regarded it as far beyond his comprehension. His mind, as usual, was wandering off over the bay, and to save his life he could not learn the rule for addition.

His lesson, however, was not the only thing that troubled him just then; a more important matter was on his mind, and perplexed him exceedingly. He had that morning found an insurmountable obstacle in his path—one that shut him out from all hopes of ever becoming a sailor.

When the sight of that fine ship had again turned Tom's attention to the sea, he laid a regular siege to his father, and tried every plan he could think of to obtain his consent to ship as boy on one of his vessels; and that morning he had asked permission to go out on the "Savannah," a schooner that was to sail in a week or two.

Mr. Newcombe had, for a long time, patiently borne his fretting and teasing; and, finally, to set the matter at rest at once and forever, he said to Tom:

"My son, when you can add up a column of figures without counting your fingers, and can tell me the capital of every State in the Union, and where it is situated, you may go to sea. Now, wake up, and see if you can't display a little energy. The Savannah will not sail under two weeks, so you will have plenty of time to do all this."

"O no, father," drawled Tom, (he always spoke in a very low tone, and so slowly that it made one nervous

to listen to him,) "I can't learn all that in two weeks. It's too hard."

Mr. Newcombe did not wait to hear what Tom had to say, but picked up his cane and started for his office, leaving his son pondering upon this new and wholly unexpected turn of events.

This was a death-blow to Tom's hopes. It was, in his estimation, a task that would have made a Hercules hesitate. Learn all that in two weeks! Did his father take him for a walking arithmetic and geography, that he expected him to accomplish so much in so short a space of time? It was simply impossible, and he was astonished at his father for proposing such a thing. Under almost any other circumstances, Tom would have said, "Then I can't be a sailor," and would have immediately turned his attention to something else. But he remembered how grand that ship looked as she sailed out of the harbor, and he could not bear the thought of forever giving up all hopes of becoming the captain of a vessel like that.

Tom regarded this as one of his unlucky days. His lesson was very hard. He had been promised a whipping if he did not get it. There was that tremendous obstacle that had so suddenly risen up before him, and altogether he felt most discontented and miserable. It was no wonder he could not learn the rule.

"O, I do wish I could be a sailor," said he, at length; "then I would n't have any teachers to bother me, and ask why I place units under units, and tens under tens, when I want to add figures, and why I carry the left-hand figure to the next column when the amount exceeds nine. What good will it do me to learn all this?

I can manage a vessel without it. And then, if I was on board ship, there would n't be any one to tell me that he 'd dust my jacket for me if I did n't get my lesson. Ah, that would be glorious! But I can't be a sailor now; I can't add figures, and tell the capitals of all the States—there 's too many of them. O, dear, what shall I do? I always was an unlucky boy, and something is always happening to bother me. Now, there 's Bob Jennings! He ought to be a happy fellow, having nothing to do but row about the harbor all day, ferrying and catching fish. He 's a lucky chap, and I wish I was in his place. Hullo, Bob, come up here!"

Tom's thoughts were turned into this channel by discovering a boy, about his own age, rowing a scow up the bay. The fisher-boy had seen Tom rolling about on the grass, and, if the latter could have known the thoughts that passed through his mind, no doubt he would have been greatly astonished.

Bob Jennings was the son of a poor widow who lived in the village. His father, like the majority of men in Newport, had followed the sea for a livelihood, but, having been washed overboard from his vessel during a storm, Bob was left as the only support for his mother and two little brothers. From the time he was strong enough to handle an oar, he had been accustomed to work, and, unlike Tom, he was not ashamed of it. He was ready to undertake any thing that would enable him to turn an honest penny; and many a dime found its way into his mother's slim purse, that Bob had earned by running errands after his day's work was over. But, if he was obliged to work hard while his father was living, he was compelled to redouble his exertions now, for the pittance

his mother earned by sewing and washing could not go far toward feeding and clothing four persons. Bob well understood this, and he worked hard and incessantly. Every morning, rain or shine, he was on hand at pier Number 2, which he regarded as his own particular "claim," ready to ferry the workmen across the harbor to the ship-yards. After this was done, he pulled down the bay to his fishing grounds, from which he returned in time to be at his pier when the six o'clock bell rang in the evening.

Bob was ambitious, and he longed to follow in the footsteps of his father. Like all the boys in Newport, who seemed to inhale a passionate love of salt water with the air they breathed, he looked forward to the day when he should become the master of a fine vessel. But his mother could not live without his assistance. His earnings, however small, were needed to procure the common necessities of life; and, thus far, Bob had been unable to take the first step toward attaining his long-cherished object. A few weeks previous to the commencement of our story, he had entered into an agreement with his mother, to the effect, that as soon as he could lay by a sum sufficient to support her and his brothers for two months, he was to be allowed so go on a short voyage. This served as an incentive to extra exertion, and Bob worked early and late to accomplish the desired end. Every cent he earned, he placed in his mother's hands; and so impatient was he to save the amount required, that he reserved not a penny for himself, but went about his work ragged, shoeless, and almost hatless. How often, as he rowed by the elegant mansion in which Tom Newcombe lived, had he given utterance to the wish that he could find some way in

which he might earn as much money as the rich ship-owner allowed his son to spend foolishly every month. He was confident that it would amount to double the sum required to support his mother while he was gone on his first voyage, and would have placed it in his power to enter upon his chosen work at once. Nearly every day, as he pulled by in his leaky, flat-bottomed boat, he saw Tom rolling about under the trees; and, when he drew a contrast between their stations in life, it almost discouraged him.

Hearing Tom calling to him, Bob turned his boat toward the shore, and in a few moments reached the spot where the young student was seated. There was a great difference between the two boys. The rich man's son was neatly clad, while Bob was barefooted, wore a brimless hat on his head, and his clothes were patched in a hundred places, and with different kinds of cloth, so that it was almost an impossibility to tell their original color. The fisher-boy thought his garments looked worse than ever by thus being brought in contrast with those of the well-dressed student, and he involuntarily seated himself on the ground, with his feet under him, as if to hide them from the gaze of his more fortunate companion. But the difference did not cease here. About the one, there were virtues that could not be hidden by ragged clothes; and in the other, there were glaring defects that made themselves apparent in spite of his well-blacked boots and broadcloth jacket; and, had a total stranger been standing by, with an errand he wished promptly executed, the successful accomplishment of which was of the utmost importance, he would, without hesitation, have selected Bob as the more reliable. There was an

honest, resolute look about him, which showed that he was ready for any thing, and that he felt within him the power to overcome all obstacles; while Tom had a listless, die-away manner of moving and talking, that led one to believe that he had been utterly exhausted by hard labor.

"You're a lucky chap, Bob Jennings," said Tom, at length, throwing down his book rather spitefully, and seating himself on the grass opposite the fisher-boy. "A most lucky chap."

Bob looked down at his clothes, but made no reply.

"You have no arithmetic lesson to learn, as I have," continued Tom. "All you have to do is to row about in your boat all day, and be your own master. That must be fun!"

For a moment Bob gazed at his companion in utter astonishment. Was it fun that he was compelled to work day after day, through storm and sunshine, and at such small wages that his mother could scarcely lay by half a dollar a week? Was it fun for him to pull five miles down the bay, in a leaky boat, and back, without catching a single fish, as he had done that day? If there was any fun in that, the fisher-boy thought he had never before understood the meaning of the word.

"No, I don't see much sport in it," answered Bob. "I call it downright hard work, and so would you if you could trade places with me for a few days. You are the one that sees all the fun. You have no work to do."

It was now Tom's turn to be astonished. He started up in perfect amazement, and looked at the fisher-boy for a moment without speaking.

"I see all the fun, do I?" said he, when he had recovered somewhat from his surprise. "Bob Jennings, let me tell you that you don't know what hard work is. Did your father ever tell you that he'd dust your jacket for you if you didn't get a difficult arithmetic lesson?"

"No," answered Bob, slowly.

"Well, that's just what my father told me this morning," continued Tom, "and he also informed me that I can't go to sea until I can add up a column of figures, and tell him the capitals of all the States. Now, that's a harder job than you ever had laid out for you."

The fisher-boy did not act as though he considered that a very difficult task, for he brightened up, and said:

"I wish somebody would give me that job, and agree to support my mother while I was at sea; I'd sign shipping articles in three days. Don't you want that book?" he added, as Tom picked up his arithmetic and threw it down the bank toward the water, as if he wished it as far as possible out of his sight. "If that book was mine I wouldn't fling it about that way. I'd study it and try to learn something."

"Why, I thought you wanted to be a sailor," said Tom.

"So I do. But I don't want to be before the mast all my life. I want to be captain; and I will, too, if I live to be a man."

"So will I. I am going to be master of a full-rigged ship, like the one that left port about two months ago. But what's the use of studying arithmetic?"

"Why, you can't be captain until you understand navigation," said Bob; "and you can't learn that unless you know something about figures."

As Tom heard this very disheartening piece of news, he stretched himself at full length on the grass, drew on a long face, and twisted his mouth on one side, as if he had half a mind to cry. He looked at the fisher-boy a moment, then out over the bay, and finally drawled out, "Then I can't be a sailor! I didn't know they had to study arithmetic. I can't learn it, and there's no use in trying."

As Tom said this, he happened to glance toward the gate, and saw his father approaching. Remembering the whipping that had been promised if he again failed in his lesson, he hastily sprang to his feet and ran down the bank after his book; while Bob, thinking that the gentleman regarded him rather suspiciously, retreated to his boat and pulled toward home.

Mr. Newcombe always returned from his office at five o'clock; and Tom, knowing that it was time to recite his lesson, applied himself to his task with much more energy than he was accustomed to display. But, as usual, his mind was upon something else; for, as he read over the rule, he was pondering upon what the fisher-boy had told him—that a sailor, in order to win promotion, must know something about arithmetic. Here was another obstacle in his way. All that day Tom had cherished the hope that he might, in some manner, be able to avoid the task his father had imposed upon him, of committing to memory the capitals of the different States, and learning to add without counting his fingers; but here was something that could not be got over. In building his air-castles (for he was continually dreaming about something) he thought only of the happiness he would experience when he should

be able to grasp the object of his ambition. He did not believe that whatever is worth having is worth striving for! He never reflected upon the toil and privation to which he must submit before he could work his way up from "boy" to the responsible position of captain! Work! That was something he never intended to do. His idea was, that, when he arrived at the proper age, he would, in some mysterious manner, be placed in the position at which he aimed, without the necessity of labor. He was hopeful if he was unlucky; and, although he had suffered repeated disappointments in the failure of his grand schemes, he clung to the belief that, at some time during his life, something would "turn up" in his favor, and that then he would have plain sailing. There was but one way out of his present difficulty that he could discover, and that was to hope that the fisher-boy was mistaken. What did Bob Jennings—a boy who had never been to school three months in his life—know about such things? He was just as liable to make mistakes as any body; and Tom at first hoped, and ended with finally believing, that Bob knew nothing about the matter.

As these thoughts passed through Tom's mind, he was industriously studying his lesson, but of course without comprehending one word of it, and presently the ringing of a bell summoned him to the school-room. The sound acted like a charm on Tom, for, as he arose to his feet and walked slowly toward the house, he began to study earnestly, and to such good advantage —for he learned very readily when he set himself resolutely to work—that he began to hope he might pass a creditable recitation. When he entered the

school-room, he found his father and the teacher waiting for him. A hasty glance at the former served to convince him that the threatened whipping would certainly be forthcoming if he failed, and just then he looked upon himself as the most abused boy in the world. The recitation commenced, and with considerable assistance from his teacher Tom managed to blunder through his lesson, but it is certain that he knew no more about it when he got through than he did when he began. Although Mr. Newcombe was far from being satisfied, Tom escaped without a whipping, and that was all he cared for.

CHAPTER III.

TOM GOES TO SEA.

TOM, having managed to get safely through his arithmetic lesson, put his book away in his desk, and again sauntered out on the lawn, where he threw himself under one of the trees, and thought over his hard lot in life. Study hours being over for the day, he was now at liberty to amuse himself about home in any way he chose; but, as was generally the case with him, he was at a loss to know how to pass the time until dark. He never took a book of any description in his hands if he could avoid it. Reading, he thought, was a very dull, uninteresting way of passing the time. He never looked at a newspaper, and if some one had asked him the name of the President of the United States, it would have been a question that he could not answer. As for play, he never saw any fun in that, but he was as ready to engage in any kind of mischief as any boy in the village.

Newport, like every other place, had its two "sets" of boys, who went by the names of "Spooneys" and "Night-hawks." The former were, in fact, the good boys of the village. They played foot-ball on the common until dark, and then went home and stayed there.

With these Tom rarely had intercourse. On two or three occasions he had mustered up energy enough to engage in a game of ball with them, and each time he came home crying, and complaining that "the boys played too rough," and that "some fellow had shoved him down in the dirt." The fact was, Tom did not like these boys, because he could not be their leader. They could all beat him running; the smallest boy on the common could kick a foot-ball further than he could; and, in choosing the sides for the game, Tom was always the last one taken. The reason for this was that Tom, besides being a very poor player, never entered into the sport as though he had any life about him. He was very much afraid of soiling his clothes, or getting dust on his boots; and this was so different from the wild, rollicking ways of his playmates, that they soon learned to despise him; and, if Tom was now and then pushed into the mud during the excitement of the game, no one pitied him or stopped to help him out.

But with the Night-hawks—those that took possession of the common at dark—Tom was a great favorite. They knew how to manage him. He was easily duped, and, if the boys wished to engage in any mischief, Tom was generally the one selected to do the work, for he made an excellent "cat's-paw." A few words of flattery would completely blind him, and, not unfrequently, call forth a display of recklessness that made every body wonder. If the Night-hawks wished to remove the doctor's sign, and place it in front of a millinery store, or if they wished to fasten a string across the sidewalk, to knock off the hats of those that passed

by, one of them would say to Tom: "Now, Newcombe, you do it. You are the strongest and bravest fellow in the party. You are not afraid of any thing." These words never failed to have the desired effect; for Tom would instantly volunteer his services in any scheme the Night-hawks had to propose. Any mischief that was done, anywhere within two miles of the village, was laid to these boys; but had the matter been investigated, it would have been discovered that Tom was the guilty one, for he did all the work, while his companions stood at a safe distance and looked on.

Of course Mr. Newcombe knew nothing of this. His orders to Tom were to remain in the yard after dark; but the latter regarded this as another deliberate abridgment of his privileges. The merchant often said that there was something in the night air particularly injurious to the morals of boys, but Tom did not believe it. He did not like to remain in the house while other boys were out enjoying themselves. However, he always promised obedience to his father's commands, while, perhaps, at that very moment he was studying up some plan by which he might be able to evade them, and was revolving in his mind some scheme for mischief which he intended to propose to the Night-hawks that evening. Mr. Newcombe was a shrewd business man; he could calculate the rise and fall of the produce market to a nicety, but he was not shrewd enough to discover that Tom, in spite of the readiness with which he promised obedience to all his requirements, was deceiving him every night of his life. Perhaps he thought that Tom would not dare to disobey him; or he may have imagined that he was a boy of

too high principle; but, whatever may have been his thoughts, he never troubled himself about his son after giving him orders to remain in the yard, and Tom, having always escaped detection, grew bolder by degrees, until, at last, he became the acknowledged leader of the Night-hawks. He would rack his brain for days and weeks to perfect some plan for mischief, and follow it up with a patience and perseverance which, if exhibited in the line of study, would have placed him at the head of his class in a month. He was willing to work harder to obtain the approbation of a dozen young rogues like the Night-hawks, than to gain that knowledge that would enable him to be of some use in the world.

On the evening in question, Tom was sadly troubled with the "blues." He was almost discouraged, for several things had "happened to bother him" during the day, and among them was the very disheartening piece of news which the fisher-boy had communicated to him. If it was true—and sometimes Tom almost believed that it was, for that would be "just his luck"—he knew that he must do one of two things—either abandon the idea of becoming a sailor, or pay more attention to his books. If there had been any alternative, Tom would certainly have discovered it, for he was very expert in finding a way out of a difficulty. But now, either his good fortune, in this respect, had deserted him, or else he was in a predicament from which there was no escape, for he lay thinking under the trees for nearly an hour, and finally answered the summons to supper without having been able to discover a way out of his quandary.

Tom ate his supper in silence, and so did Mr. New-

combe, who was pondering upon the same subject that was at that moment occupying his son's n.ind.

The result of the recitation that afternoon had convinced the merchant that something ought to be done. Tom was making no progress whatever in his studies. He had been under the charge of his private teacher for nearly six weeks, and he had not yet completed the first rule of his arithmetic. The reason for this was, that Tom had been so long in the habit of dreaming, that any thing like study or work, had become distasteful to him. The question was, how to arouse him —how to convince him that if he ever expected to be any body in the world, he must work for it. This could not be done by keeping him at his books, for that plan had been repeatedly tried, and had as often failed. He did not want to send him to the military school, or allow him to go to sea; for he knew that Tom would not be contented in either place. But something must be done; and, after thinking the matter over calmly, the merchant finally decided upon his course. He said nothing, however, during the meal, to Tom, who, when he had finished his supper, hunted up his cap, went out of the house, and walked down the lawn toward the beach, where his sail-boat, which he called the Mystery, lay at her anchorage. He had started with the intention of taking a sail; but, on second thought, he knew that he could not enjoy it, for his troubles weighed too heavily on his mind. He therefore abandoned the idea, and seating himself on the grass, pondered upon what the fisher-boy had told him, and, for the hundredth time, wondered what he should do next.

It had now begun to grow dark, and the shouts that came from the common bore evidence to the fact that the Night-hawks were ready to begin operations. Occasionally he heard a long, loud whistle, which, under almost any other circumstances, would have been promptly answered by Tom, for it told him, as plainly as words, that he was wanted. But he did not feel at all inclined to engage in any mischief that night, so the boys were obliged to get along the best they could without him. It was fortunate for Tom that he resolved to stay at home, for scarcely had he come to this determination, when he heard his father calling him. Tom obeyed the summons, and when he entered the room where Mr. Newcombe sat, the latter inquired:

"Well, Tom, have you completed your task?"

"O, no, I haven't," was the answer. "I can't learn the capitals of so many States."

"Have you tried?" asked the father.

"O, now, don't I know what I can learn without trying?" asked Tom, throwing his cap into one corner of the room, and seating himself near his father. "If a fellow knows he can't do a thing, what is the use of his trying? It's only time thrown away."

Mr. Newcombe, knowing that it would be of no use to argue the point just then, changed the subject by inquiring:

"Have you learned any thing at all during the last month?"

"O, I don't know," answered Tom. "I can't study all alone. There's no fun in it. Say, father, can't I go to sea without learning the capitals of all the States?"

"What could you do on board a vessel, Tom? You would be a foremast hand all your life."

"O, no, I would n't! I would soon be captain. Say, father, may I go? I want to go."

"You would have to go on a great many voyages before you could be master of a vessel. I went to sea thirteen years before any one called me captain."

"Well, now, may I go? Say, father, may I go?"

"The discipline is very strict," continued the merchant. "A sailor is not allowed to stop and grumble at any orders he receives. Besides, you will have to take a very low position; you will be nothing but a boy."

"I do n't care!" said Tom, impatiently. "May I go? That's what I want to know!"

"There are other things you must bear in mind also said Mr. Newcombe; but Tom, fearing that his father was about to begin a long, uninteresting lecture, interrupted him with:

"Now, why do n't you tell me whether or not I can go? Say, father may I go?"

The merchant, however, did not immediately answer his question; and Tom, giving it up in disgust, threw himself back in his chair with the air of one who expected to listen to something very unpleasant.

"You must remember," said his father, "that there is nothing romantic about a sailor's life. It is all drudgery and toil from one year's end to another; and if a man wins promotion, he does it by his own abilities. How would you like to be in a vessel that was cast away?"

Tom thought of the wreck he had seen towed into the harbor, and, for a moment, he hesitated, but it was only for a moment; for when he remembered how grand that

ship looked as she started on her voyage, and thought how proud he would feel if he could only be the captain of a vessel like that, he decided that he would willingly risk the shipwreck, if that would enable him to gain the object of his ambition.

"And how would you like to go aloft and take in sail during a storm?" asked Mr. Newcombe.

"I would n't care!" was the answer. "I would n't do it long. I 'd soon be captain."

If Tom once got an idea into his head, no matter how ridiculous it was, he clung to it, and stubbornly refused to be convinced that it was impracticable. This notion of his, that he could soon learn enough about seamanship and navigation to be intrusted with the management of a vessel, was one of his pet ideas; and if all the sailors in the world had endeavored to show him that the thing was impossible, he would still have held firmly to his opinion. Mr. Newcombe had often tried to convince his son of his error, and he had discovered that there was but one way to do it, and that was to let Tom learn in the hard school of experience. A few months at sea would drive all such improbable ideas out of his head.

"Very well," said the merchant, picking up his paper. "That 's all, Tom!"

"O, no, it is n't, father! Why do n't you tell me whether or not I may go. Say! *Say!*"

But Mr. Newcombe, who appeared to be deeply interested in his paper, took no further notice of him; and Tom, vexed and disappointed, picked up his cap, went out of the house, and walked up and down the lawn. The shouts that now and then came to his ears, told

him that the Night-hawks still held possession of the common, and Tom had half a mind to go down and join them. But he knew, by the way his father spoke, that he had some idea of allowing him to go to sea, and he did not wish to destroy, by an act of disobedience, all the bright hopes he had so long cherished, and which he imagined could be realized if he was permitted to ship as cabin-boy on some vessel.

"I always wanted to go to sea," said Tom to himself, as he walked impatiently up and down the lawn; "and I'd like to know why I can't go as well as any body? I wonder why father didn't tell me what he is going to do about it? What good does it do to plague a fellow this way? Now, if I can go out in the Savannah, I'll certainly learn enough to be second mate by the time we get home; then, after that, I'll be first mate, and then captain. Then, if a war should break out, I would go into the navy, and I might be promoted to captain of a man-o'-war. Wouldn't that be glorious!"

Tom became amazed when he saw what a bright prospect was suddenly opened up before him, and he resolved that he would not allow his father a moment's rest until he had obtained his permission to go to sea on the Savannah.

Before he went to sleep that night, Tom had made up what he regarded as an unanswerable argument, which he intended to present for his father's consideration in the morning. But he was saved that trouble; for, at the breakfast table, Mr. Newcombe informed him that he had decided to allow him to go to sea on the Savannah; at the same time giving him advice which, had he seen fit to follow it, would have made him a better

and wiser boy, and would have saved him a great deal of trouble. Tom was in ecstasies. He made the most extravagant promises in regard to good behavior and prompt obedience of orders, and repeatedly assured his father that he was "cut out" for a sailor, and that it would not be long before he would be the master of a fine vessel.

"Don't build your hopes too high on that, Tom," said Mr. Newcombe. "Do your duty faithfully as boy, and don't waste your time in dreaming about being a captain; for that can only come after years of hard work."

But Tom did not believe that. He had read about boys but little older than himself being masters of vessels, and if he wasn't as smart as they were, he would like to know the reason why.

Tom ate but very little breakfast that morning, for the joy he experienced in receiving his father's permission to go to sea had taken away all his appetite. He hastily swallowed a few mouthfuls, and then, catching up his cap, started toward the wharf to communicate the good news to the captain of the Savannah. Tom was well acquainted with all the officers and some of the crew of the schooner, and he looked upon them as the finest men in the world. The captain, especially, was his beau ideal of a sailor. He always wore wide pants, a tremendous neck-tie, and, when he walked, he rolled from side to side, like a vessel in a gale of wind—a style of locomotion that Tom had more than once vainly endeavored to imitate. With the older members of the crew he had always been a great favorite. Whenever they returned from a voyage, they always

brought something for Tom; and, besides, they invariably spoke of him as "Our young skipper," a title which pleased the boy exceedingly.

Tom had long ago decided that his first voyage to sea should be made in the Savannah, and, for a time, it had been the height of his ambition to obtain the command of a vessel exactly like her. But now he had set his mark higher; a top-sail schooner was not good enough for him—he wanted a full-rigged ship. However, the Savannah would answer his purpose just then, for he considered that it would be much pleasanter to go to sea with friends who would always treat him with the respect due the son of the owner of the vessel, than to make his first voyage in company with total strangers. He had often talked to the captain about going out with him, and that gentleman, with all a sailor's fondness for his chosen calling, had spoken so encouragingly to him, and had appeared to take so much interest in his affairs, that Tom concluded he would be happy to know that he was to have a new cabin-boy. Toward the wharf, then, he went at the top of his speed, and reaching the Savannah, he clambered over the rail, and ran down into the cabin, where the captain was eating his breakfast.

"It's all right, now!" shouted Tom, as the skipper shook hands with him. "It's all right! I am going out with you!"

"I am glad to hear that," said the captain, "for I am always happy to have good company. You are going out just for the fun of the thing, I suppose?"

"Yes, I expect to see plenty of fun, but I'm going to ship as boy. I want you to teach me all you can, for I

intend to be master of a ship one of these days. Now, captain," he added, glancing at the doors of the different state-rooms in the cabin, "which is my room?"

"Why, if you ship as boy," said the captain, "you'll have to sleep with the sailors in the forecastle."

"Will I?" exclaimed Tom in astonishment. "Not if I know it. Do you suppose that I am going to bunk with the hands? No, sir! I'm going to have one of these rooms, and mess with you."

"I understood you to say that you wanted to learn all about the vessel!" said the captain.

"So I do!" replied Tom. "I want to be the best navigator and seaman that ever sailed salt water!"

"That's an object well worth working for," said the skipper. "But our best sailors never obtained their responsible positions by creeping in at the cabin windows. They came in at the hawse-hole for'ard, and worked their way aft."

"That's all well enough for those who are obliged to do it," replied Tom. "I know I can learn just as much about a vessel by living in the cabin as I can by staying in the forecastle."

As Tom said this he made a hurried examination of the two unoccupied rooms in the cabin, and, selecting the one he thought would suit him best, he continued:

"Now, captain, this is my room. Lock it up, and keep every body out of it! As soon as I can get my bedding ready, I will have it brought down here."

The captain, no doubt, thought that Tom was assuming considerable authority for one who was to rate as "boy" on the shipping articles, but he made no remark, knowing that in due time he would hear the full par-

ticulars of the matter from Mr. Newcombe. Tom spent some time in looking about his room, and deciding what articles of furniture he ought to bring down in order to set it off to the best advantage, and finally he left the vessel and walked toward his father's office. A few moments later Mr. Newcombe went on board the schooner, and, after a long conversation with the captain, he returned to his office, where he found his son waiting for him.

"Now, Tom," said the merchant, as he seated himself in a chair beside the boy, "I suppose you want to know something of the life you will lead for the next six months!"

"O, I know all about it now," said Tom. "I'll have a jolly time."

Mr. Newcombe, however, thought differently, and he began to tell his son exactly what he might expect if he shipped on board the schooner. In the first place, he would be treated, in all respects as one of the crew. He would be allowed no liberties that were not granted to others; and he would begin his career as a sailor, as his father had done before him—at the "lowest round of the ladder." All the duties expected of a boy on board ship would be required of him, and, if he disobeyed orders, he would be liable to punishment. He would receive boy's pay—forty-eight dollars for the voyage—and when he returned home, his father would give him the money due him, and he might use it as he thought proper. If he wanted to be a speculator on a small scale, (as Tom had often thought he would be if he only had some money,) that would be capital enough for him to commence with.

"O, no, father," said Tom, confidently, "I have given up all idea of being a trader. I'll go to sea again at once. You seem to think that I will soon grow tired of a sailor's life."

Those were exactly the thoughts that were at that moment passing through the merchant's mind; but, seeing that his son still stubbornly held to his own opinions, and knowing that he could not be talked out of them, he brought the interview to a close by turning to his desk and picking up some letters that had just been brought in. Tom was left to himself, and being too uneasy to sit still, even for a moment, he loitered about the office for a short time, and then started for home.

"Father doesn't know what he is talking about," he soliloquized. "I never saw a man with such funny ideas. Does he suppose that the captain of the Savannah is going to make me work? No, sir; he won't do it. He won't dare do it; for my father owns that schooner, and I guess I shall have a right to do as I please. I expect to go aloft and take in sail, but I don't call that work. The captain and I understand each other, and I know that I shall get along finely."

Tom thought the day on which the schooner was to sail never would arrive, for never before had the time hung so heavily on his hands. He was very cross and fretful, and spent the entire week in walking about the wharf, with his hands in his pockets. His private teacher had left the mansion as soon as it was decided that his pupil was to go to sea; and when Tom saw him go out of the yard, he drew a long breath of relief, as if a heavy load had been removed from his shoulders. Had he dared to do so, he would have thrown his desk

and all his books out after him; but as it was, he contented himself with believing that he would never again be required to open an arithmetic or geography.

How he pitied his unfortunate acquaintances who were obliged to attend school, and how they all envied Tom, when they learned that he was about to go on a voyage to Callao. Every one of them said that Callao was in Peru; but Tom stoutly maintained that it was in England, and that when he arrived there, he would persuade the skipper to take him to see the Queen."

"Look at your geography," said one of the boys, "and you will see that you are mistaken."

"O, no, I won't do it," drawled Tom. "I said I never would open that book again if I could help it, and I'm going to stick to it."

At last, to Tom's immense relief, the long-expected day arrived. From daylight until dark he sat on the wharf, watching the workmen who were engaged in loading the vessel, and when he went home to supper with his father, the latter informed him that the schooner would be ready to sail by ten o'clock that evening. At nine o'clock, Tom bade his mother good-by, and returned to the wharf, accompanied by his father. He was dressed in a full sailor's "rig," with wide pants, a blue flannel shirt, a tarpaulin, which he wore as far back on his head as he could get it; a neck-tie, that looked altogether too large for him, and, when his father was not looking at him, he tried to imitate the captain's walk. If clothes made the sailor, Tom could certainly lay claim to that honor. Shortly after he reached the vessel, his bedding and extra clothing arrived, and Tom gave orders to have them carried

into the cabin. Had he taken the trouble to see how the command was obeyed, he would have found that his bundle was unceremoniously thrown down into the forecastle. At last, when every thing was ready for the start, a steamer came along-side to tow the schooner out of the harbor. Mr. Newcombe took leave of the young sailor, and sprang upon the wharf, after which, the lines were cast off, and the Savannah began her voyage.

CHAPTER IV.

LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE.

TOM, delighted to find himself at last on board an outward-bound vessel, remained on deck until the schooner was fairly out of the harbor. He took his stand beside the captain, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, pushed his hat on one side, and watched the movements of the sailors, who ran about the deck executing the different orders, as if he perfectly understood the meaning of every command, and had long been accustomed to every thing he saw. Occasionally he turned his eyes toward the rapidly receding lights on the wharf, but, far from experiencing a single feeling of regret at leaving home, he felt like shouting for joy. In fact, according to Tom's way of thinking, he had nothing to be sorry for. At home he was always unhappy, something was forever happening to trouble him; but in the life before him he saw nothing but sunshine. He was entering upon the easy and romantic life of a sailor. He would soon learn enough about seamanship and navigation to be intrusted with the command of a vessel; and, when he arose in the morning, instead of looking forward to six hours' work at his arithmetic and geography lessons, he would find before him a day of uninterrupted enjoyment.

"Ah, this is glorious!" said Tom to himself, as the schooner, having cleared the harbor, began to move more rapidly over the waves. "This is fine! This is just the life for me! I 'm a land-lubber no longer! I 'm a sailor; and I would n't be the least bit sorry if I should never see Newport."

Tom's soliloquy was interrupted by an event that was as sudden as it was unexpected. He had taken no pains to keep out of the way of the sailors; and, when the crew came aft to hoist the mainsail, he was so absorbed in his reverie that he took no notice of them until he was aroused by the exclamation: "Here you are! Always in the way! Get out o' this!" accompanied by a violent push, which sent him at full length on the deck.

"Now, look here!" drawled Tom, as he hastily arose to his feet. "I 'd like to know what you are about! I 'll tell the captain."

Surprised and indignant at such treatment, he at once started off to find the skipper, whom he at length discovered standing in the waist.

"Captain!" he exclaimed. "Did you see that fellow push me down?"

"No!" replied the captain, in a tone which implied that he was not at all interested in the matter, "I did n't see him."

"Well, somebody did push me down, flat on the deck," said Tom, angrily. "I want you to haul that man up for it, for I won't stand it."

"Well, then," said the captain, coolly, as he turned on his heel and walked aft, "you must keep your eyes open, and not get in any body's way."

Tom was astonished to find that the skipper did not sym-

pathize with him; but, believing that he did not fully understand his complaint, he started to follow him, intending to state his case more clearly, when he was roughly jostled by the second mate, who was hurrying forward to execute some order.

"Look here!" shouted Tom. "Do n't you know that this is my father's vessel? I want you to be a little more careful about pushing me around this way. You are nothing but a mate."

"Ay ay, my hearty!" interrupted the sailor. "I know all about that. But now, just take my advice and keep out of the way, or you 'll go overboard."

"I will, will I?" exclaimed Tom. "I 'll tell the captain! Look here!" he continued, as he approached the skipper, who was standing beside the man at the wheel. "What do your men mean by pushing me about? I want you to remember that my father owns this vessel. I won't stand such treatment; and I want you to put a stop to it; that's all about it."

Tom certainly stated his case plain enough this time, and he fully expected that the captain would at once punish the men who had treated him so disrespectfully; but what was his surprise and disappointment when that gentleman turned on his heel and walked off whistling. Tom was more than surprised at this; as the sailors would have expressed it, "he was taken all aback," and, for a moment, he stood looking after the retreating form of the captain, as if he was utterly unable to understand what had caused this sudden change in him. Undoubtedly he had been sadly mistaken in the man. While on shore, he was good natured, and had always appeared to take great interest in every thing Tom had to say; but

now, he was exactly the reverse. He not only did not offer to protect him from the men, but he seemed anxious to keep as much as possible out of his way. Tom, who was not dull of comprehension, began to realize the fact that he had got himself into a most unpleasant situation. He had built his hopes high upon the captain only to be disappointed; and, with his mouth twisted on one side, as if he were on the point of crying, he went down into the cabin to arrange his bed. He went to the room he had picked out for his own use, and was astonished to discover that it had already been taken. A bed was made up in the bunk, and in one corner stood a large sea-chest, with the name J. H. Robson painted on it, showing that the room was in the possession of the second mate. His own bed-clothes where nowhere to be seen. Almost too angry to breathe, Tom was about to start in search of the captain, when he met that gentleman coming down the companion-way.

"Look here, captain!" exclaimed Tom, pointing to the bed, "your second-mate has taken possession of my room."

"Your room!" repeated the captain. "That room does n't belong to you."

"Why, captain!" said Tom, in surprise, "I picked it out for my own use, and told you to lock it up, and to allow no one in it. Do n't you remember?"

"Yes, I recollect. But I told you, at the same time, that sailors sleep in the forecastle."

"And I also told you that I was going to sleep in the cabin, and mess with you," said Tom, decidedly. "Tell somebody to take that bed out of there."

"Where will Mr. Robson sleep, then?" asked the captain. "The second mate always occupies that room."

"Well, you can put him somewhere else. I'm bound to have that room."

"I think, Tom," said the skipper, quietly, "that you will have to go into the forecastle. There's where you belong. You rate as 'boy' on the shipping articles."

"But I didn't agree to go among the men," said Tom, "and I won't do it. What do you suppose my father would say if he knew that you wanted me to bunk in the forecastle?"

"I say, captain," shouted the second mate down the companion-way at this moment, "is that young sea-monkey down there? Ah, here you are!" he continued, discovering Tom. "Lay for'ard into the forecastle, and take care of your donnage. Up you come with a jump."

"Now what's my baggage doing in the forecastle?" asked Tom, growing more and more astonished at each new turn of events. "Who put it in there? Tell one of your men to bring it into the cabin at once."

"Sonny," replied the mate, shaking his finger at Tom, "come up here!"

There was something in the sailor's tone and manner that a little alarmed Tom, and led him to draw closer to the captain, as if seeking his protection. But the latter, after pulling off his coat and hanging it up in his state-room, seated himself at the table, and began to examine his chart; and Tom, finding that he was left to fight his battles alone, resolved to do so to the best of his ability. Turning to the mate he replied, angrily:

"I 've got no business on deck. I can't be of any use up there; besides, I am sleepy, and I want to go to bed."

"Well, then, lay for'ard into the forecastle, where you belong," said the mate.

"I tell you I do n't belong there!" exclaimed Tom, almost ready to cry with vexation; "and, what 's more, I am not going there. I want you to remember that this is my father's vessel, and you had better mind what you are about. And, see here, Mr. Robson! you have put your baggage in my room, and I want you to take it out of there at once. That 's my room."

The mate, instead of replying, came down the stairs, and, seizing Tom's arm with a grip that brought tears to his eyes, exclaimed:

"I want no nonsense, now!" If you do n't obey orders, I 'll take a bit of a rope's-end to you. Now go for'ard on the run."

Tom struggled desperately to free himself from the mate's grasp, but, finding that his efforts were unavailing, he appealed to the captain for protection.

"See here, captain!" he shouted, "are you going to sit there and see me abused in this manner, when my father owns this vessel?"

"I can't help you, Tom!" replied the captain. "That gentleman is one of the officers of this schooner, and must be obeyed. If you will take my advice, you will do just what he orders you to do."

Tom, however, did not see fit to follow this advice, but still continued to struggle with the mate, when the latter tightened his grasp on his arm, and, pulling him up the stairs in spite of his resistance, he hurried him

across the deck, and pushed him down into the forecastle, exclaiming:

"Now, then, stay there! If I catch a glimpse of your ugly figure-head on deck again to-night, I'll use a rope's-end on you. Now, that's gospel!"

There were several sailors in the forecastle arranging their beds, and nothing but pride restrained Tom from giving full vent to his troubled feelings in a flood of tears. But even here he was not safe; he had escaped from one source of annoyance only to be immediately assailed by another; for, as he came rapidly down the stairs, assisted by a violent push from the mate, one of the sailors exclaimed:

"Here he comes! Just look at him! Mates, that's the chap as wants to learn to be a cap'in."

"You don't tell me so!" chimed in another. "Sonny does your mother know you're here?"

"Just look at his riggin'!" said another, having reference to Tom's suit of new clothes. "He looks like a Dutch galliot scudding under bare poles!"

"An' them white hands," said the one who had first spoken, "they're just the thing for a tar-bucket."

These were but few of the greetings Tom received upon his advent into the forecastle. Had he been wise, he would have listened to them as good-naturedly as possible; but the tone in which they were spoken irritated him, and he took no pains to conceal the fact.

"Now, you hush up," he shouted. "This is my father's vessel. I'll have you taught better manners the minute we get ashore again."

This only made matters worse. The sailors gathered about him, pulling him first one way and then another,

all the while ridiculing his dress or his appearance, until Tom, unable to escape from their clutches, or to endure their taunts, began to cry.

"Look at that! He's pumping for salt water!" said one.

"Now, see here, shipmates!" exclaimed another, an old sailor with whom Tom had always been a great favorite, "it has gone far enough, now. Don't bother the life out of the lad. Never mind 'em, sonny," he added, patting Tom on the head, "you've got the right stuff in you, and you'll make a sailor-man yet. Jack, just throw his donnage over this way. Now, Tommy, here's a bunk that don't seem to be in use; let me tumble up your bed for you."

The man meant to do Tom a kindness; and the sailors, seeing him thus defended, at once ceased tormenting him; and, it is probable that if he had kept silent, he might have been allowed to sleep in peace. But Tom's ill-nature could not be suppressed. He considered that he had been grossly insulted by both the captain and the second mate. He was very indignant at the sailors for addressing him in such disrespectful language, and he was resolved to show them, one and all, that he regarded them as beneath his notice. Roughly jerking his bed-clothes from the sailor's hand, he pushed him away from the bunk, exclaiming:

"Let me alone. I don't want any of your help. I'll have you all discharged the moment we reach home again. You forget that my father owns this schooner."

"No, I don't, Tommy," said the sailor. "But don't be foolish, now. You'll always have a friend in Jack Waters."

"Get away from me," shouted Tom. "I don't want your friendship. All I ask of you is, to let me alone."

The man, seeing that Tom was in a very bad humor, sprang into his bunk, leaving the young sailor to himself. The latter soon had cause to regret that he had been so imprudent, for the new members of the crew, who were all strangers to Tom, began to laugh at and ridicule him worse than ever. Every exhibition of anger on his part only brought loud shouts of derision from the sailors; and Tom, seeing there was no chance for escape, finally spread his bed in one of the bunks, and, crawling into it, covered his head with the blankets. There he lay, thinking over his situation, and studying up plans to revenge himself upon the sailors. He was surprised, angry, and discouraged; surprised, because there had been a great change in the captain and the older members of the crew, for which he could not account. On shore, they had always treated him with the greatest respect; but now, they seemed to take pleasure in tormenting him. He was angry, because he—Tom Newcombe, the son of the richest man in Newport—had been addressed as "sonny." Besides, the second mate had dared to lay violent hands upon him, and the sailors seemed ready to carry out the system of persecution that had been commenced in the cabin. And he was discouraged, because he saw all his bright hopes of one day becoming the master of a fine vessel disappearing like the mists of the morning. What encouragement had he to persevere in his determination to become an accomplished navigator and seaman, if he was to be subjected to such treatment as he had just received? None whatever. If the two hours he had passed on

board the schooner were a fair sample of the life he would be compelled to lead for the next six months, he had already had enough of following the sea.

"O, I can't stand it!" said Tom to himself. "I did n't think I would have to sleep in the forecastle. That captain is n't the gentleman I thought he was. I wonder what made father send me to sea? I knew I could n't be a sailor, and there's no use in trying. I wish I was at home again!"

It was long after midnight before he fell asleep, and, even then, he was not allowed to rest in peace. It seemed to him that he was awakened every five minutes by orders shouted down into the forecastle. Some one was constantly moving about; and every man that passed by his bunk, brushed against him and pulled the blankets off on the deck. The air of the forecastle was hot and almost stifling; and this, together with the rocking of the vessel, presently made Tom sea-sick as well as home-sick. He grew worse and worse, and finally began to be afraid that he was going to die. The sailors, who were not long in finding out what was the matter with him, again began to torment him, and finally, in his desperation, Tom heartily wished that the schooner and all on board, himself included, might go to the bottom. Rolling and tossing about on his hard bed, he passed a most uncomfortable night, and morning brought him no relief from his troubles. At the first peep of day, the second mate came into the forecastle; but, seeing at a glance, poor Tom's condition, he again went on deck, leaving him to his meditations. Shortly after this, a sailor entered, bearing in his hand a covered dish, with which he approached Tom's bunk, saying:

"Can't you eat a little, my hearty? Here's a nice bit I have brought you."

As he spoke, he uncovered the dish and exposed to Tom's view a piece of fat pork swimming in gravy.

If there is any thing a sea-sick person dislikes, it is the sight of greasy meat; and the thought of eating a piece of that the sailor brought him, operated on Tom like an emetic. It was fully an hour before he recovered from this new plan of torture; and when he became able to think the matter over, he resolved to go to the captain and have the sailor punished. Shortly after noon, having become somewhat accustomed to the rocking of the vessel, his sickness began to abate, and Tom thought he might muster up strength enough to walk to the cabin.

Slowly rising from his bunk, he crawled up the stairs, and the first man he met, when he reached the deck, was the second mate, the very one of all others he most dreaded to see.

"Ah! your're up again, are you?" exclaimed the officer. "I hope you feel better!"

Tom was surprised to be addressed in so kind a tone by the man who had treated him so roughly the night before, and he began to think that, perhaps, the mate was not so bad after all.

"Where are you going?" continued the officer, as Tom moved toward the companion-way.

"I am going to see the skipper," was the answer. "I want some of these men put in irons!"

"Well, Tommy!" said the mate, "never mind the captain now. He's asleep, and you had better not disturb him. He'll be better natured if you let him have

his after-dinner nap out. But what have the men been doing to you?"

"Why, they won't let me alone!" said Tom. "They keep bothering me all the time; and I won't stand it, when my father owns the schooner. I came here to learn to be a sailor, not to be laughed at, and told that I look like a 'Dutch galliot under bare poles.'"

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do," said the mate. "If you'll obey all orders promptly, and to the very letter, I'll stand by you, and see that nobody bothers you. But you say you want to learn to be a sailor. Come here; I have something to show you!"

The mate's face wore a good-natured smile, and his words were spoken in a tone that, under any other circumstances, would have won Tom's heart. But, as it was, he could not be easily deceived, and he had a suspicion that the officer was about to show him some work he wished him to do. The mate evidently guessed the thoughts that were passing through his mind, for he continued:

"Of course we don't intend to work you hard at the start, Tommy. I'll give you an easy job. Are you fond of horses?"

"Yes, I am!" replied Tom, eagerly. "Have you horses on board?"

"Yes, we've got one—a regular old sea-horse. He's been with us now—let me see—this is the fifth voyage. Would you like to take care of him? That's the job we always give to boys when they first come on board vessels."

"All right," said Tom. "Where is he?"

"Come this way, and I'll show him to you," said the

mate, as he led Tom toward the galley, where a negro was engaged in sawing wood.

"Now, Tommy," he continued, "can you do that kind of work?"

"Saw wood!" exclaimed the young sailor, in surprise. "No, I can't do that. But where's the horse?"

"Here it is! I meant the saw-horse," said the mate. "By the time you have made as many voyages as he has, you'll know something about a ship. You say you can't do that kind of work?"

"O, no, I can't!" drawled Tom.

"Well, then, that's the first thing you'll have to learn. You never can be an able seaman until you understand every thing about a vessel, you know. Snow-ball!" he added, turning to the negro, who was the cook of the schooner, "here's your new boy. He'll saw all the wood you want."

The negro dropped the saw, and the officer, again turning to Tom, said:

"Now, then, bear a hand!"

"O, now, I can't saw wood!" whined Tom. "I didn't ship for that, and I won't do it."

The whole appearance of the mate instantly changed. Stepping to the foremast, he uncoiled a heavy rope from one of the cleats, and, again approaching Tom, exclaimed:

"Now bear a hand, sonny, or I'll use this rope."

Tom saw that the mate was in earnest, and that the only way to escape punishment was to obey. Reluctantly picking up one of the smallest sticks of wood he could find, he placed it upon the saw-horse, and took his first lesson in the duties of a sailor. He had never

attempted work of that kind before, and it was a most tedious task to saw that stick of wood; but it was accomplished at last, and Tom drew a long breath of relief, for he thought that his work was done.

"That's the way to do it," said the mate, approvingly. "You'll make a sailor yet. You'll be captain one of these fine days. Now try another!"

Tom looked first at the wood-pile, then at the rope which the mate still held in his hand, and, not daring to refuse, he placed another stick on the saw-horse, and again went to work, his eyes so blinded with tears that he could scarcely see what he was about. For an hour the mate stood by watching his movements, and, seeing that Tom began to make more rapid headway, he said, as he returned the rope to its place:

"You begin to understand how it is done. Now, I want you to listen to me, and I will tell you all your duties. In the morning, you must be up at five o'clock. Your first job will be to black the captain's boots; then come here and saw wood till breakfast time. After that, you will make up the bunks in the cabin, and then come back here to the wood-pile. When this is gone, I'll find more for you. Those are your duties. Mark you, now, no more nonsense, or I'll make you sup sorrow with a big spoon."

As the mate ceased speaking, he turned and walked aft, leaving Tom lost in wonder. Every hour he spent on board the schooner, developed some new and most unpleasant features in the life of a sailor, upon which he had never made any calculations. Sawing wood was one of them, and blacking the captain's boots another. Had he, while at home, been told to perform

such work, he would have indignantly refused; and, as it was, he had half a mind to arouse the captain and demand his protection. But there was the second mate pacing the deck between him and the companion-way; and the young sailor knew, from what he had already experienced, that, if he left his work, the officer would not hesitate to fulfill his threat of using a rope's end. Poor Tom was already "supping sorrow with a big spoon." Besides being homesick, he had seen more than enough of a sailor's life; and he firmly resolved that, if he again put his foot on shore in his native village, he would stay there.

But why had the mate selected him to perform these very disagreeable duties? There was another boy on board, whose name was Bob White. He was nothing but the son of a sailor, and, according to Tom's way of thinking, *he* was the one that ought to do the work. While he was compelled to saw wood like a laborer, Bob was walking up and down the deck, putting on as much style as if he had been the commander of the vessel. Of course he had duties to perform, but they were very light and pleasant compared with those imposed upon Tom; and the latter resolved that, as soon as he could see the captain, he would have matters arranged differently.

"Come, come, bear a hand; no skulking here!" came the voice of the second mate, abruptly terminating his meditations; and Tom fearing the rope's end, again took up the saw and went to work. Observing that the officer kept close watch of all his movements, the young sailor applied himself steadily to his task, and, as he saw his pile of wood growing larger by degrees, he began to

hope that the cook would have fuel enough to last two or three days. But when the middle of the afternoon came, the negro began the work of cooking supper; and when he had carried three armfuls into the galley, Tom's pile of wood was all gone.

"Why, boy!" exclaimed the cook "what 'count be you on board this vessel? Go back from dar!" Pushing Tom away, he seized the saw, and, in a few moments, had fuel enough to finish cooking the supper.

This was another severe blow. Even the negro cook scolded him; and, for the first time in his life, Tom made to himself what he considered to be a most humiliating confession; namely, that the position a person occupies among his fellow-men, depends not upon his father's wealth or influence, but upon his own abilities. The sailors all knew that Tom was the son of the richest man in Newport, but that had no weight with them. In their estimation, he was nothing but a "surly young land-lubber," and of no possible use in the world. Tom, we repeat, realized the position in which he was placed, and one would suppose that he would have seen the necessity of submitting to his fate with as good a grace as he could command, and of improving every opportunity that was offered him to learn something about his duties. But, unfortunately for him, this was very far from his thoughts. The unexpected obstacles that had suddenly arisen in his path, he regarded as altogether too great to be overcome, and he deliberately resolved that he would do absolutely nothing except upon compulsion. He was continually saying to himself: "O, I can't be a sailor; I know I can't!" and that was the same as though he had said "I sha'n't try."

CHAPTER V.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

THAT night, after supper, the second mate informed Tom that he belonged to the port watch, and that when that watch was called at midnight, he would be expected to answer the summons with the others. Tom was not at all pleased to hear this, for the night promised to be a stormy one, and the thought of remaining on deck in the rain from twelve o'clock until daylight was not an agreeable one. He sought his bunk at an early hour, and being considerably wearied with his day's work, soon forgot his troubles in a sound sleep. It seemed to him that he had scarcely closed his eyes, when a gruff voice shouted down the hatchway:

"Port watch ahoy! Roll out lively!"

This was followed by a commotion among the sailors, who sprang out of their bunks; and, as they commenced pulling on their pea-jackets, one of them shook Tom by the shoulder, exclaiming: "Turn out, sonny! It's your watch on deck."

Tom was perfectly well aware of that fact, but, after listening a moment, he heard the moaning of the wind through the shrouds, and the pattering of the rain on the deck, and fearing the storm more than the wrath of the second mate, he drawled out:

"O, I can't get up! It's raining!" and thinking that he had settled the matter, he pulled the blankets over his head, to shut out all sounds of the storm, turned his face to the bulk-head, and in a few moments was fast asleep again. But he was not allowed to remain long undisturbed, for the second mate stood on deck as the watch came up, and seeing that Tom was not among them, he ran down into the forecastle, and, seizing the young sailor by the arms, pulled him, bed and all, out of the bunk. Tom arose to his feet as soon as he could throw off the blankets, and turning to the mate, angrily exclaimed:

"Now, see here, Mr. Robson! I tell you, once for all—"

He suddenly paused, for the officer held a short piece of rope in his hand, which he lifted in a threatening manner; and, Tom having a wholesome fear of punishment, hastily pulled on his boots and pea-jacket, and followed the mate to the deck.

It was a dismal night. The wind sent the rain in blinding sheets over the deck. The schooner rocked and plunged in a manner that made it impossible for Tom to keep his feet without holding fast to something, and, for the thousandth time, the young sailor heartily wished himself safe at home. As the gale increased in force, it became necessary to shorten sail; and Tom, as usual, being in the way, was roughly pushed about, and even kicked, as if he had been an unruly dog. When five o'clock came, he was holding on to the foremast, pondering upon his hard lot, and thinking over the complaints he would make to his father against the crew as soon as the schooner returned home, when he

was aroused by the voice of the second mate, whom he regarded as his evil genius.

"Didn't you hear that bell, youngster?" inquired the officer. "It's five o'clock, and time for you to turn to."

Tom knew that "turn to" meant go to work; and he also remembered that his first task was to black the captain's boots. At first he determined to flatly refuse to perform such work; but, on second thought, he concluded to go into the cabin and tell the skipper how badly he was treated, and again demand his protection So, without stopping to answer the mate, he sullenly walked aft, when the officer, as if guessing his intention, said:

"I'll give you five minutes in which to black the captain's boots; and, if you are not on deck again at the end of that time, I shall be after you."

Tom made no reply, but went down into the cabin, where he found the captain seated at the table examining his chart.

"Well!" exclaimed the latter, as Tom entered, "how do you like a sailor's life?"

"O, I don't like it at all!" was the answer. "I can't imagine why my father sent me to sea, to be kicked about and abused as I have been on board this vessel. I am not treated right, captain. I didn't ship to saw wood or to black your boots, and I'm not going to do it. I am here to learn to be a sailor."

The captain drummed with his fingers on the table, but made no reply.

"And just see here, how wet I am!" continued Tom. "I've been out in all this rain ever since midnight."

"O, that's nothing," said the captain, who could not

refrain from laughing. "We can't always have pleasant weather, you know."

"I don't mind the rain so much," replied Tom. "I could stand that if I was only treated half-way decent. I didn't suppose that you would make me work so hard."

"I think your duties are very light," said the captain. "If you intend to be a sailor, you must learn how to do all kinds of work. When I was a boy, and made my first voyage, I had to do just the work you are now called upon to do."

"What! black boots and saw wood!" exclaimed Tom, in utter amazement.

"Exactly!" was the answer.

"Then I can't be a sailor. That's settled. I can't do such work. I wouldn't mind going aloft; but I can't black boots. Why can't Bob White do it?"

The captain made no reply, but again turned his attention to his chart, while Tom helped himself to a chair, resolved, now that he was again safe in the cabin, to remain there. Once or twice, his eyes wandered to the captain's boots, which had been placed just outside the door of his state-room, and to the brush and box of blacking that lay beside them; but he could not endure the thought of playing the part of a boot-black. He remembered a little negro boy he had often seen plying his trade on his father's wharf, and he could not bear the idea of placing himself on an equality with him.

"Captain," said Tom, at length, "must I black your boots?"

"I have nothing to say," answered that gentleman.

"If the second mate told you to do it, you must obey him, for I can't countermand his orders."

"Why didn't he tell Bob White to do it?" whined Tom. "I can't."

"You can try," said the captain.

"O, no, I can't," insisted Tom. "I never blacked boots in my life. It wouldn't look well for me to do it. Send for Bob White. He's the one that ought to do such work."

"I have nothing to do with the matter," repeated the captain. "And my advice to you is, to obey all orders you receive promptly, and to the letter. You will fare much better if you do."

Tom made no reply, for he plainly saw that it was useless to hope for assistance from the captain. Slowly rising to his feet, he picked up the blacking brush between his thumb and finger, and, with his eyes filled with tears, began the work of polishing the captain's boots, his every movement showing how distasteful was the work to him. At this moment, the second mate appeared at the head of the companion-way, and the sound of his voice infused new energy into Tom, who, regardless of soiling his fingers, grasped the brush firmly in his hand, and proceeded with his work as if he had been accustomed to blacking boots all his life. The mate watched him for a moment, and then said, approvingly:

"That's the way, sonny. You'll make a fine sailor one of these days. I'll give you five minutes more, and be sure you have those boots blacked by that time, for you must be at your wood-pile."

Tom was not at all pleased with the tone in which

the mate addressed him; for, although he appeared to be friendly, there was something about him which told the young sailor that it would be well for him to be at his wood-pile as soon as possible.

The work of blacking the boots was finished at last, and it was like every thing else Tom ever undertook—not more than half done. There was no polish on them; but the captain, although he was far from being satisfied with the work, pitied Tom, and when the latter handed him his boots, he pulled them on without remark. Then, knowing that his five minutes had nearly expired, Tom went on deck, and walked slowly toward his wood-pile. The wood was wet, and in placing a stick upon the saw-horse, Tom's fingers and clothes were sadly soiled, and he was almost on the point of crying with vexation when he saw what a plight he was in.

"Take hold of it, sonny," exclaimed the second mate, who stood close by, watching him. "Take hold of it. It can't hurt you, so do n't be afraid."

But Tom was very much afraid of soiling his clothes, and the consequence was, that, although he worked steadily for two hours, he did not saw wood enough for the cook to get breakfast with. This brought him another scolding from the negro, who declared, "'Fore Moses, I never did see sich a useless chile. I can't see what boys like you is made for, no how. Go 'way from dar."

Tom readily gave up the saw, glad indeed to be relieved, even for a short time, from the work he so much despised.

After breakfast, the men belonging to the port watch went below to sleep until noon; all except Tom, who still had one duty to perform, and that was, to make up the

beds in the cabin. This he did in his usual careless manner, so that, when night came, the captain and both mates were obliged to make them over again. But Tom did the work to his own satisfaction, that is, in the shortest possible space of time.

When he returned to the deck, he found the second mate and Bob White engaged in conversation. The latter was drenched to the skin, and looked altogether like a person who had just been pulled out of the water. The officer had one hand on the boy's head, and in the other he held a short piece of rope; and Tom, who, from some cause which he himself would have found it difficult to explain, thoroughly hated Bob, was in hopes the mate had been given him a whipping. But he was soon undeceived, for, as he approached, he saw that Bob's face was lighted up with a smile of triumph, and he also heard the mate speaking to him in the kindest possible tone, evidently praising him for something he had just done. Tom was angry in an instant. The mate had never praised him for any thing he had accomplished, and he wondered what Bob had been doing to win the officer's approbation. He did not remain long in ignorance, for the mate, upon discovering him, called out:

"Come here, sonny! The captain tells me that you want to learn to go aloft," he continued, as he led Tom toward the mainmast; "and you might as well begin now as any time. Do you see that Irish pennant up there?" pointing to a piece of rope which fluttered in the wind from the cross-trees, and which the officer had placed there but a few moments before, on purpose to give Tom his first lesson in going aloft; "do you see it? Well, go up and bring it down to me. Up you go!"

Tom looked at the mast, the top of which described almost a half-circle in the air, as the schooner plowed through the waves, and then at the mate, and finally drawled out, in his lazy way: "O, I can't! I would n't mind going up there in calm weather, but the schooner pitches so badly, I could n't hold on. I should certainly fall down."

"Why, sonny, sailors can't choose the weather for going aloft!" said the mate. "I am surprised to hear a boy who expects some day to be master of a vessel talk as if he was afraid; come, bear a hand; do n't be a coward."

The officer had touched Tom in a very tender place. He did not like to be called a coward, and, almost involuntarily, he started toward the shrouds, as if he intended to convince the mate that he was not wanting in courage. But just then the schooner gave a tremendous lurch, and Tom, being taken unawares, was thrown flat upon the deck. Slowly rising to his feet, he clung to the fife-rail for support, and, again looking up at the mast, drawled out:

"O, I can't go up there! Why do n't you tell Bob to go? I have to do all the work!"

But Bob had, but a few moments before, performed the same experiment; only the mate had placed the rope he wished him to bring on the extreme end of the bowsprit, and securing it was a much more unpleasant piece of work than Tom was now called upon to execute; for, in addition to running the risk of being shaken overboard, he had been almost smothered by the waves. Bob, however, had shipped for the purpose of learning to be a sailor; and when the mate directed him

to bring the rope, he started at once to obey the order, and the officer, pleased with his prompt obedience, patted him on the head and praised him for his courage. The mate related this circumstance to Tom; but the latter, although he disliked to be beaten in any thing, could not muster up sufficient courage to make the attempt, until the officer stepped to the mast and began to uncoil one of the ropes. Then knowing that it was dangerous to hesitate any longer, Tom reluctantly placed his hands on the ratlines, and began the ascent. He slowly worked his way up until he reached the height of ten or twelve feet from the deck, when he paused, and, looking down at the mate, said, in a most pitiful voice:

"O, I can't go up there, I tell you! I shall certainly fall down."

"Go on, sonny!" replied the officer, shaking the rope. "Up you go; no backing out."

Tom again began to work his way upward, stopping every few feet to remonstrate with the mate, whose only answer was: "Up you go," accompanied by a flourish of the rope, which always seemed to infuse new courage into Tom. At length the cross-trees were reached, the rope was detached after considerable trouble, and Tom, feeling very much relieved, descended in safety to the deck, and handed it to the mate, who said:

"That's right, sonny! I tell you that you will be master of a full-rigged ship some of these days. Now you may go and turn in until noon."

Tom was very glad to hear this, for he was always delighted to have even a short respite from his unpleasant duties. Precisely at twelve o'clock, however, he was again called on deck by the second mate, and

compelled to resume his work. He managed to saw a very little wood, and was twice sent aloft by the officer, who, as before, was obliged to threaten the rope's end in case of refusal. Day after day was passed in this way, and, long before the schooner arrived at her destination, Tom had lost all desire to become the commander of a vessel. His position was far from being a pleasant one, but, in this respect, he could blame no one but himself. He well knew what his duties were, but he would never perform them except upon compulsion. He was always ill-natured; and the consequence was, he was cordially disliked by all on board, from the captain down to the negro cook. The former scarcely ever spoke to him, except to repeat his advice in regard to promptly obeying all orders (which, it is needless to say, was advice wasted), and the latter scolded him continually for his failure to keep the galley stove in fuel. The sailors tormented him in every conceivable way, and invariably called him "Sonny"—a name that Tom particularly disliked.

But it was the severest blow of all to Tom to notice how kindly Bob White was treated by both officers and men. The reason for this was, that Bob always cheerfully and promptly obeyed all orders, without waiting to be threatened with punishment. He was always accommodating, and ready to do any thing to assist one of the crew; and when he was spoken harshly to—as he was sometimes—he never answered back. Tom, on the contrary, was always cross and sullen; he moved about the deck as if he scarcely had strength to stand on his feet; and when one of the sailors asked him to do an errand for him, he would answer: "Wait on your-

self! I didn't ship to be every body's servant." Under such circumstances, the only wonder was, that he ever escaped severe punishment. He knew, as well as any one, that he was entirely to blame; but he regarded the officers and crew of the schooner as his inferiors, and he was resolved that he would obey them only when he was forced to do so.

One afternoon the second mate called Tom and Bob White; and, after informing them that he was about to begin teaching them the names of the different ropes, asked if they thought they could learn them. Bob promptly replied that he could; but Tom, although he wanted some excuse to leave his wood-pile, thought the task was too difficult. He looked up and down the vessel, and at the numerous ropes which crossed and recrossed each other in every direction, and finally drawled out:

"O, no, I can't learn them, Mr. Robson. There's too many of them."

"Get back to your wood-pile. then," said the mate, beginning to get discouraged, "and, sonny, remember what I tell you! You'll never be any body in the world so long as you say 'I can't!' Why don't you say 'I'll try!'"

"O, now, what's the use of trying!" whined Tom. "Don't I know what I can do, and what I can't, without trying?"

"Bear a hand at that wood-pile," said the mate. "Come, now, Bob!"

Tom went back to his work, while Bob walked about the schooner with the mate, paying strict attention to all he said, and trying hard to remember it. The re-

sult was that, by the time they reached Callao, he could stand his watch at the wheel in fair weather, knew the names of all the ropes, and had once assisted in taking in the sails. In the meantime, Tom had learned that the right hand side of the schooner, looking forward, was called starboard, and the left hand, port; and that was the extent of his knowledge of a vessel.

When the Savannah reached her destination, Tom drew a long breath of relief, for he thought that his work for the present was over. But the galley still needed wood, the bunks must be made every morning, and the captain wanted his boots blacked as regularly as when at sea; and by the time these duties were done, it was night; so that Tom never once went ashore. He had always thought that he would experience much pleasure in visiting foreign countries, but now he was so absorbed in his troubles that he never took any notice of what was going on; and when the vessel had discharged her cargo and been reloaded, he knew no more about Callao than he did when he first arrived there.

One day, just before the schooner was ready to start on her homeward voyage, the mate came forward where Tom was at work at his wood-pile, and informed him that the captain wished to see him. Confident that at last affairs had taken a turn in his favor, the young sailor hurried aft, and as he entered the cabin, the skipper said:

"Tom, I have noticed that you don't admire your duties, so I have concluded to make a sort of supercargo of you."

"Have you, captain?" exclaimed Tom, very eagerly.

"Then I needn't saw wood, or make up the bunks, or black your boots?"

"No, if you suit me, Bob will have to do that work."

Tom was overjoyed to hear this, for, as we have already said, he cordially disliked Bob, and had often wished that he could see "how he would look sawing wood and blacking boots." Besides, Bob had, of late, rather looked down upon Tom as a "land-lubber," which made the latter very angry; and he was glad indeed that he was to be placed in a position where he could pay Bob back in his own coin. Another idea occurred to him. He knew that a supercargo was quite an important personage on board a vessel, and perhaps, Tom imagined, he might have authority enough to make Bob black *his* boots. The bare thought that he would thus be able to settle up all old scores, almost made him beside himself.

"I always wanted to be a supercargo," said Tom; "and I think that's just what I was cut out for. I know that I'll suit you."

"Well, then," said the captain, going to his table and picking up several sheets of paper, "let us begin work at once. Here are the bills for some goods I bought a few days ago, and, as I want to go ashore and settle up all our accounts, I wish you would add up these figures and see if the amounts are correct."

These words of the captain were so many death-blows to all Tom's hopes. He walked up to the table and glanced over the bills, one after the other, but the sight of those long columns of figures was too much for him.

"O, captain, I can't add up all these figures," said he. "There's too many of them. It would take me

all day. I didn't know that supercargoes had to do such work as this."

"What!" exclaimed the captain, in surprise, "don't you understand addition? Why, Tom, what good did it do you to go to school? Didn't you study arithmetic?"

"O, yes, I did; but it was too hard. Let me do something else. I can't add figures."

"Then you are of no earthly use to me," said the captain. "Mr. Robson," he added, raising his voice, "send White here."

This was a turn of events that Tom had not expected. He knew that the captain intended to give Bob the position, and he could not bear the thought of seeing the one he so thoroughly hated placed so far above him.

"Captain," he whined, "can't I do something else besides add figures?"

"No," was the answer. "I only wanted you to do my writing and ciphering."

"O, I can't do such work as that. It's too hard. I might as well go to school and be done with it. Let me do something else."

"I have nothing else for you to do," repeated the captain. "And now, let me give you another piece of advice. When you get home again, go to work at your books, and learn all you can. Above all, stop that bad habit of saying 'I can't.'"

"What shall I say, then?" asked Tom. "When I say that I can't do a thing, I mean it, and there's no use of—"

"Here you are!" interrupted the captain, turning to

Bob White, who at that moment entered the cabin. "Can you add figures?"

"O, yes, sir!" replied Bob, with a smile, as much as to say, "I thought any body could do that."

"Then see if the amounts of these bills are correct," continued the captain. "That will do, Tom. I am done with you."

The latter, however, made no move to leave the cabin, until the second mate, who, standing at the head of the companion way, had heard all that passed, exclaimed:

"Up you come, sonny! Pitch into that wood-pile; and mark what I say," he continued, as Tom slowly and reluctantly ascended to the deck, his face all wrinkled up as if he was on the point of crying—"mark what I say! You'll never be any thing but a foremast hand the longest day you live."

Tom, too angry to reply, walked toward his wood-pile, and resumed his work. This was, by far, the severest blow he had yet experienced, and one would suppose that it ought to have convinced him that he was sadly wanting in many things a boy of his age ought to know, and that it would be well for him to lose no time in making up his deficiencies. But, as usual, such was not the case. He had given up all hopes of ever becoming a sailor, and, during the homeward voyage, all attempts on the part of the officers to teach him any thing were simply useless. Bob White pursued a different course. He attended faithfully to his duties about decks never failed to improve every opportunity to pick up, even the smallest items of information, and nearly every day Tom enjoyed the satisfaction of hearing him praised by both officers and men, while of himself they

scarcely took any notice whatever. Thus, week after week passed, and, as the Savannah neared home, Tom, who had only been kept within bounds through fear of punishment, began to place less restraint upon his actions. He became, if possible, still more inattentive to his duties, and, what little he did accomplish, was so badly done that some one was obliged to do the work over after him. At last, the schooner arrived within a day's sail of Newport. If nothing unusual happened, she would be safely moored at Mr. Newcombe's wharf by the afternoon of the next day. Tom was on watch until midnight; and when he turned into his bunk, it was with the determination of doing no more work as long as he remained on board the vessel. The next morning he was awakened as usual, at five o'clock, but, instead of obeying the summons, he remained in bed. The mate waited fully a quarter of an hour for him; but finding that Tom was not likely to make his appearance, he went down into the forecastle, resolved to give him a lesson, the remembrance of which would go with him through that day, at least. Tom heard him coming, and turning his face to the bulkhead, he closed his eyes as if asleep. But this did not turn the officer from his purpose, for, lifting Tom in his arms, he carried him to the deck, and, in spite of his struggles and promises of better behavior in future, threw him headlong into a cask that had that morning been filled with salt water to wash down the decks. The cask was deep, and, when Tom's hands rested on the bottom, nothing but the soles of his boots could be seen above the water. This bath seemed to have washed all his bad habits out of him, especially his laziness, for he kept steadily at work at his wood-pile

during the entire day, without once stopping, except for his dinner. His mind was fully as busy as his arms, for he was constantly repeating to himself the charges he intended to bring against the crew of the schooner, and he could not repress a smile of triumph, when he thought how they would feel when they found themselves discharged from his father's service. Four o'clock in the afternoon came at length, and, once, as Tom looked toward the village which was then in plain view, he saw a small steamer coming out of the harbor to meet them. He was not, however, allowed to cease his work, for the mate kept him busy at his wood-pile, until the Savannah was made fast to the wharf, and Tom saw his father come on board. Taking no notice of his son's pitiful looks, which told him as plainly as words that he had not enjoyed the voyage, Mr. Newcombe inquired, as soon as the greeting was over:

"Well, Tom, how do you like a sailor's life? I suppose you intend to go out in the Savannah again!"

"O, no, I do n't, either!" drawled Tom. "I knew I could n't learn to be a sailor. I've been treated worse than a dog on board this vessel. Now, father, I want you to discharge—"

Tom was about to begin his complaints at once, but at this moment the captain of the schooner approached, and Mr. Newcombe turned to speak to him. He was provoked because his father did not pay more attention to him, as he regarded his business of more importance then the captain's; besides, he saw several of the sailors, who knew what he was about to say, laughing at him.

However, knowing that he would have plenty of time in which to state his grievances to his father, before the

schooner sailed again, Tom shook his head at them in a threatening manner, and went down into the forecastle to pack his bed-clothes. As soon as this was accomplished, he sprung ashore, and started for home at the top of his speed.

CHAPTER VI.

TOM GOES INTO BUSINESS.

NEVER before had Tom's home appeared so pleasant or inviting. His short experience on ship-board had fully convinced him that there were much worse places in the world, and that his grand idea of being his "own master" was not exactly what he had imagined it to be. In regard to the future, he had not determined upon any course of action. He had often heard his father say that he "could n't have an idler about his house," and Tom knew that he must do one of two things—either attend school or go to work—a most disagreeable alternative. In spite of all he could do to prevent it, the warning of the second mate, that he would be a "foremast hand the longest day he lived," would occasionally ring in his ears; and once Tom almost came to the sensible conclusion that, in order to prevent such a calamity, he ought to go to school and try hard to make up his deficiencies. But this resolution, like all the good ones Tom ever made, was short lived. There were too many difficulties in his way. He would have arithmetic and geography lessons to learn, and would be obliged to remain a close prisoner six long hours during each day. So this resolution was reconsidered, and Tom settled

down, as he had done a hundred times before, in the hope that something would soon "turn up," and that he would then be able to see his way clearly.

That evening, after supper, in obedience to his father's request, Tom proceeded to give an account of all that had transpired on board the Savannah during the voyage. He had a very retentive memory, if he chose to exert it, and not even the smallest incident was omitted. He told how he had been compelled to act the part of a servant in sawing wood, blacking the captain's boots, and making the beds; how he had been thrust into the forecastle, when he had expected to sleep in the cabin and mess with the officers; how all the sailors had tormented him; and how the second mate had frequently threatened to beat him with a rope's end; and when he concluded, he settled back in his chair, confident that he had made out a very black case against the officers and crew of the Savannah, and fully expecting to hear his father announce his intention of discharging them, one and all. Mr. Newcombe sat for several minutes, looking down at the carpet, as if revolving the subject in his mind, and finally inquired:

"Did the mate ever use a rope's end on you?"

"No, sir," answered Tom; and at that moment he almost wished the officer had punished him, in order to make the evidence against him complete.

"Well," said Mr. Newcombe, "that mate is n't half the man I thought he was."

"He 's no gentleman, or he would not have treated me that way," chimed in Tom, who thought his father was debating upon the punishment the mate ought to receive.

"He's not a good officer, either," said Mr. Newcombe, looking at his son.

"No, sir; he's not. He's not fit to be second mate."

"If he was a good officer," continued the merchant, "he would have taken a rope's end to you every hour in the day."

Tom was thunderstruck! He could scarcely believe that he had heard aright. All through his trials, which he regarded as much greater than had ever before been endured by a boy of his age, he had been, to a certain extent, sustained and encouraged by the thought that his father would certainly sympathize with him; but could it be possible that he was upholding the mate? It certainly looked like it.

"O, now, father," whined Tom, at length, "you don't mean to say that I ought to have been whipped?"

"I mean to say that you ought to have been made to do your duty," answered Mr. Newcombe. "I have heard how you behaved yourself, and my only wonder is, that you escaped as easily as you did."

"But, father," said Tom, "when you made your first voyage, you didn't have to saw wood and black boots, did you?"

"Certainly I did," replied Mr. Newcombe. "What else could a green boy do on board a ship? But what are you going to do now? Are you willing to go to school?"

"O, no," drawled Tom, "I can't."

"Well, then, do you want to go into the office?"

"What will my duties be if I go there, and how much money can I earn?" asked Tom.

"Why, of course you will have to begin at the lowest

round of the ladder, and work your way up," answered the merchant. "You must be on hand at six o'clock in the morning, to sweep out the office, and make the fires, if the weather is cold; and, during the day, you will have to do errands about the village."

If there was any thing Tom had a horror of, it was running on errands. The idea of going about the streets with a bundle under his arm was intolerable to him; and the thought of building fires and sweeping out the office was no less distasteful. What would his aristocratic young friends say when they found that he was an errand boy?

"O, no," answered Tom, at length, "I can't do that. I can't sweep, or make fires, or run on errands. It would n't look well, and I would n't do it for a hundred dollars a month. But I 'll do any thing else."

"What else can you do?" asked Mr. Newcombe. "Now, Tom, if you could have any position in the office you wanted, what would you ask for?"

Tom looked at his father, then out of the window, and rapidly called to mind the occupations of the different clerks employed in his father's office. Suddenly a bright idea occurred to him, and Tom was certain that he had at last discovered the very thing he wanted.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said he. "I'll be a book-keeper."

"Why, Tom!" exclaimed Mr. Newcombe, astonished at his son's ignorance, "how could you be a book-keeper? Here you are, fourteen years old, and can't tell how much six and eight are without counting your fingers. You can't fill a position of that kind until you pay more attention to your arithmetic."

This was another piece of news to Tom. He was a good deal disappointed, for he had suddenly taken it into his head that he would like to be a book-keeper, but again that useful, but (as far as Tom was concerned) much despised branch of education, arithmetic, stood in his way. He looked at his father a moment, then down at the carpet, and finally said:

"I didn't know that book-keepers had any thing to do with figures. I can't do that kind of work, either!"

"I didn't suppose you could," said the merchant. "But of one thing you may rest assured; if you don't go to school you must go to work at something. I can't have idlers about me. To-morrow morning I want to hear your decision."

As Mr. Newcombe ceased speaking, he picked up a newspaper and began to read, thus intimating that the interview was at an end. Tom lingered about the room for a few moments, but finding that his father took no more notice of him, he sauntered out of the house and threw himself under one of the trees in the yard, heartily disgusted with himself and every one else in the world.

The conversation he had with his father will serve to illustrate some of his ideas. He wanted to fill some position in life where he could be at his ease; but he was unwilling to make the least exertion to accomplish the desired end. He had often noticed the book-keepers in his father's office; he imagined they must be happy fellows, and he had suddenly taken it into his head that he would like the same position. But when he learned that the book-keepers had something to do with figures, he had no desire to become better acquainted with their duties. He did not believe in what he had so often

heard of, "beginning at the foot of the ladder." He wanted to reach the top at a single leap; but, turn which way he would, he found that some preparation was necessary to enable him to fill any position in life. He was fairly at his wit's end. He had his choice between going to school and going to work, and the question was, which of these two evils was the least? This point, however, was soon decided against the school; and then, for fully an hour, Tom rolled and tumbled about on the grass, trying to think of some business in which he could engage that would enable him to make money without labor; and, at last, an idea occurred to him that seemed to fill all the requirements of the occasion. Without stopping to think the matter over, for fear of discovering some defects in it that had not appeared at first sight, Tom sprang to his feet, and running into the house, burst into the room where his father sat, exclaiming:

"I've got it now! I'll tell you what I'll do."

"Well," said Mr. Newcombe, looking up from his paper.

"You know," began Tom, drawing a chair close to his father's side, "you know that I have forty-eight dollars due me, that I earned on the Savannah, and if you will give it to me, I'll speculate with it."

"Well," said Mr. Newcombe, again, "what will you speculate in?"

Tom's bright hopes fell instantly. He had not thought of that.

"I'll tell you what you might do," at length, said his father, who saw that Tom's new idea could be made profitable to him in more ways than one, "you might

contract with Bob Jennings to take all the fish he can catch, at a certain price; but before you enter into an agreement with him, go to some store—Mr. Henry's, for instance—ask what he is paying for fish per pound, and then you will know how much to offer Bob. If Mr. Henry is paying four cents, you might agree to give Bob two and a half, or three cents a pound."

"I understand," said Tom.

"Then there is another way you might make something," continued Mr. Newcombe. "Butter, eggs, potatoes, and chickens are cheaper up the coast a few miles than they are here in the village, and you might take a sail up there some day, purchase a cargo, and bring it down here and sell it."

"I'll do it!" exclaimed Tom, joyfully. "That's just the very business I always wanted to go into. I'll be certain to make lots of money; and it's easy work, too."

Mr. Newcombe resumed his paper, without making any reply; and Tom, being again left to his own resources, walked about the house so uneasy that he hardly knew what to do with himself—for, having determined upon his course, he was impatient to begin operations at once. It was then about nine o'clock, and, of course, too late to make arrangements for carrying out his new scheme that night; and after loitering about the house for half an hour, he went to bed, full of his glorious ideas for the future, and so restless that it was almost midnight before he fell asleep.

It may not be improper to remark, that the last plan suggested by Mr. Newcombe, was one which, if properly managed, Tom might have made profitable.

Bob Jennings had often thought of it; and many a time, as he rowed by the merchant's house, had he wished that he was the owner of a sail-boat like Tom's, for then he would have turned trader; and two months' work, he was confident, would have enabled him to lay by a sufficient sum to support his mother while he was gone on his first voyage. But, as it was, he was powerless. His old, leaky scow could not be trusted very far from shore, and thus Bob was obliged to lose one source of income—one that, under his control, would have yielded him more in one week than his fishing did in a month. Mr. Newcombe had consented to his son's scheme, for the reason that he was in hopes that Tom, by being brought in contact with business men, might be made to see his deficiencies so plainly that he would be ashamed of them. He resolved to assist him, but, at the same time, to allow him full control of his business, so that when he failed (for the merchant fully expected that his scheme would result in failure) he could have no one to blame but himself.

The next morning, after breakfast, Mr. Newcombe started for his office, and on the way, he stopped at a store, where he had a long conversation with the proprietor, after which he resumed his walk. A few moments afterward, Tom entered the store, and after the grocer had concluded his inquiries concerning his voyage, (a matter about which Tom said as little as possible,) he asked:

"Mr. Henry, what do you pay for fish?"

"What do I pay for them?" repeated the grocer. "Have you any to sell? Are you going into that business?"

"Yes,' answered Tom, with the air of one who was doing an immense trade; "I am a speculator."

"Well, I hope you will succeed," said Mr. Henry. "Fish are in good demand now, and I'll give you five cents a pound for all you will bring me—large and small."

Tom was satisfied with the price offered, and after holding a short conversation with the grocer concerning the business in hand, he left the store, and hurried toward the home of the fisher-boy. He found Bob just getting into his boat to begin his day's work. In a few words, Tom stated the object of his visit, and concluded by offering Bob three cents a pound for all the fish he could catch. The latter at once accepted the proposition. Heretofore he had only received two cents a pound; and as he was not the only fisherman about the village, he not unfrequently found it impossible to dispose of his day's work at any price.

"Well, then!" said Tom, after they had talked the matter over. "It's a bargain. You are to bring me all the fish you can catch, and I am to give you three cents a pound for them, here at your house. Now, Bob, we ought to have that in writing. It will look more business-like."

As Tom spoke, he drew from his pocket a memorandum-book and pencil. He had often noticed that his father carried these articles, and, not wishing to omit any thing that would make him appear like a business man, he had taken care to provide himself with every thing necessary before leaving home. He seated himself on the ground, and, after considerable study, drew up the following:

CONTRAK.

be it known by all Men that ime Agreed To take all the Fish you can ketch here at your house at three cents a pond every day When you Get them.

thomas newcombe.

This he signed with a flourish, and handed to Bob, who was astonished at the bad spelling and worse writing. But Tom evidently thought it just right, for he tore another leaf out of his book, saying, as he did so: "Bob, that's yours to keep. Now I must have one too;" and he proceeded to write a second contract, which ran thus:

CONTRAK.

be it known that You are Agreed To Give me all the fish you can Ketch here at your Home Every day except sundays for three Cents a pond Good wait and no cheeting.

"Now, Bob," he exclaimed, when he had finished the document, "sign that, if you are an honest man."

The fisher-boy, after considerable trouble, deciphered the bad writing and spelling; and, although he thought the contract might have been better worded, he made no remark, for fear of offending his customer, but took the pencil and signed his name so plainly that even Tom could read it without stopping to spell it over.

"Now," said the young trader, as he carefully folded up his contract, "we're all right. Father says that whenever one man goes into business with another, he ought to make him sign an agreement; then both know just what is required of them. That's the way I intend

to conduct my business. What time will you be back, Bob?"

The fisher-boy answered that he would return at five o'clock; and, after Tom had promised to be on hand, he put his memorandum-book into his pocket, thrust his pencil behind his ear, and started toward his father's office. Mr. Newcombe, as usual, was very busy, but he managed to obtain a few moments in which to attend to Tom, who, delighted with the success that had attended him thus far, asked for two dollars, with which to carry on his day's business. The money was counted out, and Tom was requested to write a receipt, in order, as his father said, that he might learn "how to do business properly." Tom seated himself at his father's desk, and tried hard to think how a receipt ought to be written. He twisted about in his chair, bit his pen, and, at the end of a quarter of an hour, handed his father a slip of paper, on which was written the following:

you Give me too dollars to by Fish.

your affectionate Son
thomas newcombe.

Mr. Newcombe put the receipt into his pocket, and then proceeded to give Tom advice in regard to the manner in which his business ought to be conducted. But the young trader shook his head in a very knowing manner, as if to say: "I understand all about that;" and presently he left the office, and walked about the wharf with his hands in his pockets, and his pencil behind his ear.

Tom was very well satisfied with himself that moru-

ing; he had an object to accomplish, something to live for. He was a man of business, and he took no little pride in the thought that he had earned, with his own hands, the two dollars he carried in his pocket. Besides that, he had forty-six dollars more, all his own money, which would be counted out to him whenever he saw fit to call for it. His immediate success he regarded as a thing beyond a doubt; and, giving full sway to his fancy, he began to wonder what he should do with his profits.

He had often seen a neat little trading sloop, named the Swallow, sailing in and out of the harbor, and, on the morning in question, she was moored at his father's wharf. As Tom stood looking at her, admiring the graceful manner in which she rode the little swells that came rolling into the harbor, he resolved that the first money he made should be devoted to buying a sloop exactly like that. Then the object of his ambition would be realized, for he would be the master of his own vessel. Tom was elated with the idea, and to enable him to think the matter over to the best advantage, he went into a store close by, and invested twenty cents in candy. He then returned to the wharf, where he sat watching the sloop, until he saw his father leave his office at noon.

The day was a long one to Tom, for he was impatient for five o'clock to come, that he might transact his business with Bob Jennings. In order that he might make the time pass more quickly, he employed himself in eating candy, apples, and nuts, and in this way he managed to spend a dollar and a quarter. During the afternoon he met several boys of his ac-

quaintance on the streets, and to them he explained his business in the most glowing language, and even conducted them to the wharf, to show them the sloop which was to serve as a model for the one he intended to build. All his playmates looked upon him as a "lucky boy;" and even Tom began to think that the object he had in view was really worth working for.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW TOM SUCCEEDED.

FOUR o'clock came at last, and Tom, having often heard his father say that punctuality was of the utmost importance in all business matters, bent his steps toward the fisher-boy's home. He was obliged to wait there fully an hour and a half, for Bob, having met with better luck than usual, did not return until half-past five. When, at last, he came in sight, the young trader's patience was well-nigh exhausted, and he even pondered upon the propriety of giving the fisher-boy some advice in regard to being more punctual in his business appointments. But, as Bob drew near, Tom saw that he had secured a fine load of fish, and, in the excitement of counting his prospective profits, the young trader forgot the lecture he had intended to administer.

After Bob had made his boat fast to the wharf, he went into the house after a pair of scales with which to weigh the fish, and, as he returned, he exclaimed:

"Now, Tom, there's more than you can carry. I'll lend you my wagon!"

As he spoke, he brought from behind the house the conveyance in question, which he had made himself; consequently, it was a rude-looking affair, with wooden

wheels, that squeaked and grated at a terrible rate as the fisher-boy drew it toward the bank. Bob then sprang into his boat, and began to weigh out the fish, Tom standing by and looking on with his hands in his pockets. Once it occurred to him that a business man ought to examine the articles he purchased; so he raised one of the smallest fish in the tips of his fingers, looked at it a moment, and then finding that he was soiling his hand by the operation, he threw it into the wagon with the others. One thing that not a little surprised Tom, was the readiness with which Bob added up the weights of the different fish. Occasionally the latter would look up and ask, "Is that right?" and Tom would reply, "Yes, that's correct!" but the truth was, Bob calculated so rapidly that the young trader could not keep pace with him. Once, when the fisher-boy called out, "Fourteen and five are nineteen," Tom was on the point of counting his fingers to see if it was correct; but, on taking a second thought, he knew that would not look well in a business man, so he was compelled to rely entirely on Bob's honesty.

"Now, then," said the latter, when he had weighed all the fish, "there are just twenty-five pounds. Is that what you make it?"

"Yes," answered Tom, promptly, "that's right. Now, twenty-five pounds of fish, at three cents a pound, makes —makes—let me see!"

"Seventy-five cents," replied Bob, readily.

"So it does!" exclaimed Tom; although, if the fisher-boy had told him that the amount was a dollar and a half, he would have been just as ready to believe it. Seventy-five cents was all the money he had left of the

two dollars he had drawn that morning. This he counted out to Bob, who received it gladly, for it was a larger amount than he had ever before made in one day.

"If I have good luck, I'll have as many more for you to-morrow," said he, as he returned from the house, where he had been to give the money to his mother. "But what's the matter? Don't they suit you?"

This question was addressed to the young trader, who stood looking at his wagon-load of fish, with rather a doleful countenance. The question had occurred to him, How he was to get them up to the store? He knew that the wagon, when in motion, made a great noise with its wooden wheels, which would be certain to attract the attention of every one he met, and he did not think it would look well for a man of business to be seen walking through the streets drawing a wagon-load of fish after him. His pride was too great for that.

"Bob," said he, at length, a bright idea striking him, "I'll give you twenty-five cents if you will take those fish up to Mr. Henry's store for me."

The fisher-boy, who would gladly have undertaken the task for half that sum, not deeming any way of earning an honest penny a disgrace, at once took hold of the wagon-tongue and started off. Tom followed him for a short distance; but, as he had expected, the loud creaking of the wheels drew the attention of every person on the streets, who looked first at the fisher-boy and then at Tom, until the latter, unable to endure it longer, turned off and went around by the wharf, leaving Bob to himself. When he arrived at Mr. Henry's store, he found the fisher-boy there, and the grocer had just finished weighing out his fish.

"Ah, here you are!" he exclaimed, as the young trader entered. "Please come with me, and I will settle with you." And Tom was conducted to the office with as much ceremony as if he had just sold Mr. Henry a bill of goods to the amount of hundreds of dollars.

"Now then, Tom," said the grocer, producing his pocket-book, "twenty-five pounds of fish, at five cents a pound, makes just a dollar, even change—eh, Tom?"

Bob Jennings would promptly have answered, "No, sir;" but Tom could not tell how much he ought to receive without stopping to count his fingers, and, of course, that would not look well in a man of business. So he replied:

"Yes, sir; that's right. A dollar is all I want."

During the conversation with Mr. Newcombe that morning, the grocer had learned exactly how matters stood in regard to Tom; and in withholding a quarter of a dollar that rightfully belonged to the young trader, he was but carrying out Mr. Newcombe's suggestion. The latter wished Tom to learn, by experience, since he would not take advice, that he could not be too particular. Besides, Mr. Henry was losing money on all the fish he bought of Tom; for, while he paid him five cents a pound, he could sell them for only three. But this was another suggestion of Mr. Newcombe's, who, of course, made good all his losses.

Although the merchant was considerably surprised at Tom's answer, he counted out the money, and the young trader walked to the door and paid Bob his quarter of a dollar.

The fisher-boy, highly elated with his good fortune—for he had made just a dollar that day, besides what

he had received for ferrying the workmen across the harbor—started homeward with a light heart, leaving his employer in deep thought. Tom appeared to be very much absorbed in his reflections, for he stood in the doorway several minutes, scarcely heeding the persons that jostled him as they passed in and out of the store. Presently he walked back toward the office, and, discovering a vacant space behind some barrels, where he would be unobserved, he seated himself on the floor, drew his money out of his pocket, and counted it.

He had just three-quarters of a dollar. He counted it over and over several times, in order to satisfy himself that he had made no mistake, and finally searched all his pockets in the hope of discovering more. But seventy-five cents was all he could find; and gradually the unwelcome conviction forced itself upon Tom's mind that, in some utterly inexplicable manner, he had been a loser by the day's operation. He had started out that morning with two dollars, and now, after his speculation had been accomplished, he had only three-quarters of a dollar remaining.

"Somebody has cheated me!" said Tom to himself, as he arose from his concealment and walked thoughtfully out of the store. "It's Bob Jennings, that's who it is; and the contract says there's to be no swindling. O, I can't be a trader. I knew I couldn't before I commenced. This fish business doesn't pay, anyhow. I thought I should make at least three or four dollars today."

The young trader walked homeward with rather a crest-fallen air, and his acquaintances, who met him on the streets, and to whom he had that morning explained

his scheme in such glowing language, had no difficulty in discovering that Tom's first attempt at speculating had proved a failure. When he reached home and entered the room where his father sat reading his paper, the latter also saw, at a glance, that Tom had not been successful. We ought also to say that he knew exactly where his son had made his mistake. He had seen him spending his money foolishly in the morning; had met Bob Jennings as he was taking the fish to the store; and the grocer had also told him that he had withheld a quarter of a dollar of Tom's money. He also knew that if the young trader had managed his business properly, he would have made just fifty cents by his day's work. Thus, he was well acquainted with all the facts of the case; but he wished to hear Tom's opinion of the matter. Appearing to take no notice of his son's gloomy looks, he asked, in a cheerful voice:

"Well, how much have you made to-day?"

"O, I have n't made a red cent," drawled Tom. "I've lost money. I knew I could n't be a trader."

"Perhaps somebody cheated you," said Mr. Newcombe.

"O, I know they did," replied Tom, in a gloomy voice. "There are a good many swindlers about, and I believe Bob Jennings is one of 'em."

By adroit questioning—for Tom was so disgusted with the result of his first attempt at speculating, that he did not seem at all inclined to talk about it—Mr. Newcombe finally drew all the particulars from his son; and when the latter told how much he had received for his fish, the merchant exclaimed:

"There's where you lost some of your money. You

ought to have received more than that. Twenty-five pounds of fish, at five cents a pound, makes a dollar and twenty-five cents."

"So it does!" said Tom, after thinking a moment; though the fact was, he did not know whether his father was right or wrong. "I 'll go right back to Mr. Henry and tell him that I want another quarter. Now, father, where 's my cap?"

"Never mind your cap now," said the merchant. "It 's too late! The mistake ought to have been rectified before you left the store. But how does it come that you did not know how much was due you? Did n't you make any calculations?"

"O, no, I did n't," drawled Tom. "I did n't stop to make out any bill. I supposed I was dealing with an honest man! I did n't think Mr. Henry would be mean enough to cheat me."

"That 's no excuse. If every man in the world was perfectly honest, that would be no reason why business should be conducted in a careless manner. Hereafter, when you sell any thing, be sure and make out your bill beforehand, so that you will know just how much is coming to you. Now, sit down here."

Tom obeyed, and Mr. Newcombe again commenced a lengthy lecture, containing advice which he hardly expected his son would follow. He endeavored to impress upon his mind the necessity of being very particular in all his business transactions, and showed him how impossible it was for him to succeed so long as he allowed his pride to stand in his way. Any honorable labor, he said, was no disgrace; an honest working man was always respected; and he that could work, and

would not, ought to starve. He easily cleared Bob Jennings of the charge of swindling, and placed all the blame on Tom's shoulders—right where it belonged. No suggestion or item of information that Mr. Newcombe thought would be of service to the young trader was omitted, and, for once, Tom was almost convinced that he, and he alone, was to blame for his failure. He brightened up when he found where he had made his mistake, and resolved that, in all his future operations, he would be careful to avoid the rock on which his day's hopes had been wrecked. He would not spend any of his money foolishly, neither would he pay Bob Jennings another quarter of a dollar for pulling a wagon-load of fish through the streets; he would do it himself, no matter what his friends said about it.

But trading in fish he still thought would not pay. If he made only fifty cents a day, that would be but three dollars a week; and, at that rate, it would take him at least a year to save enough to buy a vessel like the trading sloop. Although he said nothing to his father on the subject, he resolved that the next day he would commence operations on a grander scale. So, on the following morning, as soon as he had eaten his breakfast, he started to pay a visit to Mr. Henry, the grocer.

"Ah, Tom!" exclaimed the latter, as the young trader entered. "Any more fish to-day?"

"No, sir!" was the reply. "I intend to take a short sail up the coast; so I thought I would stop and inquire if you want any eggs, butter, or chickens!"

"Yes, we want all we can get," answered the grocer. "We pay the highest market prices."

Tom. without thinking to inquire what the "highest

market prices" for each particular article were, left the store, and in a few moments stood in the presence of his father, whom he asked for ten dollars, to enable him to carry out his new project. The money was duly paid, and the young trader, remembering his previous experience, carefully counted it twice before he gave a receipt, which was worded like the one he had given his father on a former occasion. Tom then set out for the home of the fisher-boy, and, as before, found him getting ready to begin his day's work. He, however, at once abandoned the idea, when Tom offered to give him a dollar, if he would assist him in taking the Mystery on a short voyage up the bay.

"I'm not going to speculate in fish any more," said he. "It does n't pay. I'm going to show you, now, how to make money."

In half an hour the Mystery lay at the wharf in front of the mansion, with her sails hoisted, all ready for the start. In the forward part of the boat were several boxes, baskets, and pails, in which the young trader intended to bring home the articles he purchased; and Captain Newcombe, as he now called himself, stood on the wharf with his hands in his pockets, waiting for his first mate Bob, who had gone to the house after some provisions that were necessary for the trip. In a few moments the fisher-boy made his appearance, and when the provisions had been carefully stowed away, the painter was cast off, the captain took his stand in the stern-sheets, which he called his quarter-deck, Bob seated himself at the helm, and the Mystery began her first trading voyage.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOM MAKES NEW BARGAINS.

THE wind being favorable, the little vessel, with all her sails set, glided rapidly away from the shore; and Bob, in obedience to the order of his employer, shaped her course toward a point about five miles distant, where Tom, in one of his sailing excursions, had seen a thrifty farm-house, at which he hoped to be able to purchase his cargo. Captain Newcombe remained standing on his quarter-deck, now and then looking up at the sails, as he had seen the skipper of the Savannah do, until the Mystery was fairly under way; then he seated himself in the stern-sheets, and began to talk with Bob, giving him some insight into his new plan of operations. From some cause or another, he always felt well satisfied with himself whenever he had any new project in view; and the present expedition seemed more to his liking than any thing he had ever before undertaken. As was invariably the case with him, he confidently expected unbounded success to attend his efforts, and he determined that, from that day forward, he would make regular trips up the bay. This resolution he communicated to Bob, and also began to explain to him the manner in which he intended to dispose of his profits.

"I shall make at least ten dollars to-day," said he; "and, if I make three trips each week, and clear ten dollars each trip, that will be—that will be—let me see, how much?" (Tom never could calculate his expenses or profits by the day; he always wanted to know how much they would amount to in a week.)

"That would be thirty dollars a week," said Bob, who was rather surprised at the magnitude of the young trader's imaginary profits.

"So it would! And that would amount to—to—how much a year? Five hundred dollars, at least, would n't it?"

"Yes," answered the fisher-boy, who did not know how much it was best to assist Tom in his calculations. "It would make more than that."

"Well, now, the Swallow cost about a hundred and fifty dollars," said Captain Newcombe. "That 's lots of money; but if I made thirty dollars a week, I could pay for her in—in—a few months, could n't I?"

"Yes," answered Bob, again. "It would n't take long to pay for her at that rate."

"Then," said Tom, settling back on his elbow, "I have decided that I shall follow trading for a business. It 's easy work, and I know I shall be certain to succeed. Now, Bob," and here he straightened himself up again, "when we get into port, I want you to call me captain. I am master of this vessel, you know; and if you intend to be a sailor, you might as well learn one time as another how to address your officers. I will call you Mr. Jennings, because you are my first mate."

Bob thought this rather a droll proposition; but, as he could not well afford to offend his employer, who was

paying him much more money for a day's work than he could have earned by fishing, he promised obedience, and Captain Newcombe again returned to the subject of his profits. The amounts, according to Bob's reckoning, greatly exceeded his expectations, and he did not wish to talk about any thing else. Once, the fisher-boy, who thought the young trader was placing his mark rather high—in fact, altogether *too* high—ventured to remark that "perhaps he would n't make quite thirty dollars a week;" and Tom's reply was:

"Mr. Jennings, I am the captain of this vessel, and if I do n't know my own business, it is time I was discharged, and some better man put in my place. Do n't you suppose I can calculate figures? If I make three trips each week—and there is nothing to prevent it—and clear ten dollars each trip—and there's nothing in the world to prevent that, either—won't that amount to thirty dollars a week?" and thus Bob was silenced.

Captain Newcombe thoroughly discussed the subject in all its bearings, and he invariably arrived at the same conclusion—namely, that in a few weeks, he would be the owner of the Swallow, or of a sloop exactly like her. This made him more firm than ever in his belief that he was right in his calculations; "for," said he, "if I was wrong, I would n't get the same result every time, would I? Of course I would n't."

"Now, then, Bob," he continued, "it 's a settled thing that I am to be a trader, and that I am to own a sloop exactly like the Swallow. I'll need a crew, then, won't I? How much will you take to go as my first mate? You and I can manage her."

"Would I have regular work?" asked Bob.

"Yes; all you can do. When we are not off on a voyage, you'll have to watch the vessel, keep her in order, and see that the tides, or a storm, don't wash her ashore."

"Well," said the fisher-boy, after thinking a moment, "I'll do it for fifty cents a day."

"Fifty cents a day!" repeated Captain Newcombe, slowly. "That would be—let me see—how much a week?"

"Three dollars," said Bob.

"That's cheaper than I expected," continued Tom. "That's too cheap. I'll give you seventy-five cents a day. Is that enough?"

Bob was so amazed at this novel way of making a bargain that he did not answer immediately; and the young trader, thinking that perhaps he was not satisfied with his offer, exclaimed:

"Isn't that enough? Well, then, I'll give you a dollar a day. Does that suit you?"

If Bob had still hesitated, Captain Newcombe might have made him an offer of still higher wages, but he honestly replied:

"A dollar a day is a man's pay, and that is more than I can earn. But if you think you can afford to give it to me, I am willing to work hard for it!"

"Of course I can give it to you," said Tom. "We'll put it down in writing."

So saying, he produced his memorandum-book, and settling himself into a comfortable position, began to study up a contract.

The fisher-boy was not accustomed to this way of

doing business, neither was he at all pleased with it. He entertained very serious misgivings as to Tom's ability to carry out his grand ideas, and he did not like to be promised such high wages unless he could positively rely on receiving them. He did not wish to offend his employer, but still he thought it prudent to suggest a delay in the signing of the contract until they had made at least one trial of Tom's scheme. They would then be better able to judge whether or not such an arrangement could be made. Captain Newcombe listened very patiently, and, when Bob had ceased speaking, he straightened himself up and answered:

"Mr. Jennings, what kind of a trader would I be if I could n't make my own calculations? Why, I would be swindled out of the last cent I had. (Tom hesitated a little as he said this, for he remembered his experience of the previous day.) But if a man does his own figuring, no one can cheat him. Now I am just as certain that I shall make ten dollars to-day as I am that I am now sitting in this boat. So, you see, I can afford to pay you good wages. A dollar a day! that would be—let me think a moment—how much a week!"

"Six dollars," said Bob.

"Well, is it a bargain?"

The fisher-boy, although far from being convinced, replied that he would be more than satisfied with the wages offered, provided the business could be carried on according to those calculations; and Tom, thinking that he had made the matter perfectly clear to Bob's comprehension, again turned his attention to his contract and shipping articles. The Mystery rocked con-

siderably as she glided over the little waves, and this had the effect of making Tom's writing look worse than ever. But he studied hard and worked perseveringly to draw up the important document (and that was more than he would have done had it been his arithmetic lesson), and when it was finished he handed it to Bob, who, after a good deal of trouble, made out the following:

CONTRAK AND SHIPING ARTIKLES—

be it known to All men that you and i bob jennings and thomas newcombe do Hearby agree that when i shall make Money enough to by the Swalow, That i will Give you six dolers a weak to be my crew and first Mait, every day except sundys, and That i will treat you kindly and allways pay You the money when it is dew, if you do Your work up square and no fooling when i get the Boat, and both of us shall try To make us happy and friendly. witness my Hand and yours.—if i should happen to Slip up on getting The boat, then this Contrak and shiping artikles is not of any use—and is not Binding on said thomas newcombe and bob jennings.

"Now," said Tom, when the fisher-boy had finished reading the document, "that is plain enough, isn't it? Well, then, let me sign it first, because I am the captain, you know."

After they had both affixed their signatures to the contract, Tom put it carefully away in his pocket, and here the subject was dropped. Even Captain Newcombe had grown weary of counting his imaginary

profits, and he began to wish they were at their journey's end. As usual with him, he became very uneasy. He grew tired of sitting still, and first he wished that a sloop about the size of the Mystery would come along, so that they could have a race. Then he wished there was "some boy on board learning to be a sailor;" would n't he make him "sup sorrow with a big spoon," in revenge for the manner in which the second mate of the Savannah had treated him? Then he almost wished that a storm would come up; and, turning to the fisher-boy, he asked:

"Do you believe that if a fellow whistles while on board a vessel, it will get up a hurricane?"

"Father used to say it would," answered Bob. "But I never tried it, and I do n't want to."

"I wish I could start up a little more breeze. I would n't want a hard one, for the Mystery could n't weather it. But I 'll run the risk;" and, as Captain Newcombe ceased speaking, he began to whistle, at the same time casting his eyes rather suspiciously around the horizon, to see if the storm was coming. But there was not a single cloud to obscure the sun, which beat mercilessly down upon them; and Tom finally gave up his attempt in disgust, and again stretched himself out in the stern-sheets, under the shade of the mainsail.

Although the Mystery was making remarkably quick time, she did not sail fast enough to suit her impatient captain, who, every few minutes, raised himself on his elbow, and looked toward the point, which still seemed as far off as when they left the wharf. But, nevertheless, they were gradually drawing nearer to it, and, at the end

of an hour, Bob rounded-to and landed on the beach, a short distance from the farm-house.

As soon as the fisher-boy had hauled down the sails, Tom sprang ashore, drew his memorandum-book from his pocket, thrust his pencil behind his ear, and walked toward the house. Presently a man appeared at the door, and, as soon as Tom arrived within speaking distance, he inquired:

"Have you any eggs, butter, or chickens to sell?"

"Wal, yes," replied the farmer, slowly surveying the young trader from head to foot. "We've got some. Be you a buyin'?"

"Yes," answered Tom. "I am paying the highest market prices—the very highest."

"Wal, yes! But how much?" asked the man.

"That depends upon the quality of your goods," replied Tom promptly, assuming a very knowing look, as if he understood what he was talking about. "Let me see what you have to sell, and then I'll tell you what I'll give for it."

"Wal, sartin; step this way."

Captain Newcombe and his mate followed the farmer, who conducted them around the building, and into a room, which he called the "milk-house;" where he showed them a large basket of eggs, beside which stood a tub that contained several rolls of fine fresh butter.

"How many dozen have you?" asked Tom, after he had held one of the eggs toward the sun to see if it was fresh, though, the fact was, he knew as much about the matter before he made his examination as he did afterward.

"O, they are all right," said the farmer. "If you can

find a bad one among 'em, I 'll give 'em all to you. Now, let me see how many there are. There 's just twenty dozen an' two over," he continued, after he had counted them—"call it even twenty dozen. Now, how much be you payin'?"

"Well," answered Tom slowly, as if he was thinking the matter over, "eggs are high now, and I 'll give you twenty cents a dozen for them."

"Twenty cents!" repeated the farmer, in surprise. "Wal, I should say that eggs was high. Things must have riz up like mighty in Newport lately. Mebbe I can find some more for you; and going to the door of the kitchen, he called out: 'Betsy! Betsy! can't you rake up a few more eggs somewhere? There's a chap out here payin' a good price for 'em.'"

"Tom—I mean captain," whispered Bob, pulling the young trader by his coat-sleeve, "you can't afford to give so much for those eggs. You 'll certainly—"

"Now, Mr. Jennings," interrupted Tom, "you hold your tongue. I guess I know what I am about."

"But, captain," persisted the fisher-boy, "you can't make a cent on—"

"Now, look here," said the young trader, angrily, "once for all, will you keep still? What do you know about speculating? Those eggs are worth as much to me as they are to him; and, if I had owned them in the first place, I would n't have sold them for less than twenty cents. I do n't want to swindle the man. Now you go to the boat and get some baskets and pails."

Bob reluctantly started off to obey the order, and, just at that moment, the farmer returned, rubbing his

hands with delight when he thought of the bargain he had made.

"Now, then," said he, "the old woman says there's ten pounds of butter in that ar' kag. What's it wuth? You can see that it is fresh an' nice. Betsy always gets a higher price for her butter and eggs than any one else in the country."

"Does she?" inquired Tom. "Then I'll give you twenty-two cents a pound for it."

"Wal, I declare to goodness!" ejaculated the farmer, "how things have riz up! A feller can live easy when he can get such prices as them for what he has to sell."

As the man spoke, he took down a pair of scales from a nail over the door, and, having carefully tied the butter in a cloth, he said, as he held the scales up so that Tom could see the weight:

"A trifle over ten pounds; but we'll call it even ten, 'cause the cloth weighs something, you know."

"That's all right," said Tom. "So far, so good. Now, have you any chickens to sell?"

"Wal, no," was the reply. "If eggs is worth that much, Betsy won't want to sell the chickens."

At this moment, Tom happened to look out at the door, and discovered three very fine fowls walking about the yard. They were as white as snow, and considerably larger than any the young trader had ever seen before; and, from their great size, he at once put them down as game chickens. He once heard of a man who had made a fortune by dealing in property of that kind, and here was an opportunity too good to be lost. Pointing to the chickens, he asked:

"Can that rooster fight?"

"Wal, yes," answered the farmer; "he's like four-cent sugar—all grit. He beats all the other chickens on the place like two hundred."

"I thought so," said Tom. "Do you want to sell him?"

"Wal, no; I don't care about it."

"I'll give you three dollars for him and those two hens."

"Wal, I declare to gracious!" said the farmer, "has chickens riz up, too? I'll take that for 'em; but you'll have to help me drive 'em into the barn afore we can ketch 'em."

While this conversation was going on, Bob returned from the boat, loaded with baskets and pails. The butter was first packed away in one of the pails, and covered with a clean, white cloth, which the farmer furnished them, and the fisher-boy then turned his attention to the eggs.

"Captain," said he, "we ought to pack them in something. We'll be certain to break more than half of them if we carry them loose in these baskets."

"Can't you give us some oats or bran?" asked Tom, turning to the farmer.

"Wal, no," answered the man.

"Straw or hay would answer our purpose just as well," said Bob; "and, besides, it wouldn't cost any thing."

"O, no; I can't have my eggs packed in straw or hay," drawled Tom. "It wouldn't look well. Did you ever see eggs come into Newport packed in any thing besides oats or bran? Haven't you any oats?" he asked, again turning to the farmer.

"Wal, yes; I've got some in the bundle. I'll thrash out some for you for half a dollar."

"Go and do it, then," said Tom.

As the man turned to leave the house, his wife entered, having succeeded in finding another dozen of eggs. She also expressed her astonishment that "things had riz up so fast;" to which Tom replied that the articles were worth, to him, every cent he had paid for them. The extra dozen were placed with the others; and then Tom, seeing that the farmer was endeavoring to drive his game chickens toward the barn, sent Bob out to assist him. The fowls were finally secured, and, after the fisher-boy had taken them to the boat, he returned to the place where he had left Tom, and showed him two or three wounds on his hands, which he had received while capturing the rooster. The young trader was delighted; and the thought then occurred to him that he had done a very sensible thing when he bought those chickens, for the rooster's attack on Bob was conclusive evidence that he was "grit to the backbone."

"That farmer don't know much about chickens," said he to Bob, "or he would not have sold that rooster for a dollar. I'll get more than that for him. I knew I would be certain to succeed this time. Now,' he continued, as he again produced his memorandum book, "I've got every thing I want except the oats. Sit down here."

The fisher-boy seated himself beside his employer, who began to "make out a bill" of the articles he had purchased. Tom did the writing and Bob the calculating; and finally the book showed the following

ACKOUNT OF EXPENSES.

21 duzen eggs At twenty cts. four dollers and 20
10 ponds butter At twenty 2 cts. too dollers and 20
Three first class game chickens At one Doller 3 dollers
Oats for packing Eggs a half doller
making nine Dollers and 90

"There," said Tom, gazing admiringly at his work, "that's the first bill I ever made out. I'll show it to father when I get home. Now I'll have left just—just—let me see—"

"Ten cents," suggested Bob.

"So I will. I'll get some apples with that."

The fisher-boy thought that if the money had belonged to him, he would have saved it; but he knew that it would do no good to offer such advice to Tom; and, besides, his thoughts were turned into another channel, by the arrival of the farmer with the oats. While Bob busied himself in packing away the eggs, Tom went into the house with the farmer, to settle his bill; and after this was done, the man conducted him to the orchard, where he filled his pockets with apples. He then walked about the yard with the farmer, until Bob had carried all the articles he had purchased to the boat, when he took his leave; and, promising to return in a day or two for another load, he stepped on board the sloop, which filled away for home.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MYSTERY IN A STORM.

TOM was perfectly satisfied with his day's work—it could not have been better, he thought, even had he desired it; and, as he again took his stand on the quarter-deck and looked proudly over his cargo, he began to think that he had at last found the road to fortune. There were no obstacles in his way now; he thoroughly understood his business, and, better than all, he had no work to do. The man, whoever he was, that originated the old saying that "There is no excellence without labor," didn't know any thing about the matter, for it was sport for him to make bargains, pay out money, and count his profits. If other people were obliged to work, it was their own fault. Why didn't they do as he had done, look about and find some way of making a living without labor? Following the life of a trader, even if he didn't clear expenses, was much easier than going to school, and poring for six hours in the day over uninteresting lessons. That was all well enough for those who liked it; but, as for himself, he would show people that he could get along through the world without it. In short, Tom was delighted with the success that had attended his efforts, for the business was still new to

him, and he had not yet found any thing unpleasant in it. He remained standing on his quarter-deck, now and then turning to the fisher-boy, who was seated at the helm, to give him some order in a loud voice, so that the farmer, who stood on the beach watching them, might understand that he was the captain of the vessel; but, as soon as the man returned to the house, Tom walked forward to look at his game chickens. The rooster, ever since he was put into the box, had crowed most lustily, showing that his was a spirit which could not be broken by confinement. Seeing Tom approach, he at once put himself into an attitude of defense; and when the young trader forced his hand between the bars on the box, he was saluted with a peck, and a blow from the rooster's spurs that brought tears to his eyes. But Tom endured the pain without a murmur. He had received convincing proof that the fowl was thorough game, and this gratifying knowledge served as a balm for his wounds. He was, however, very careful not to put his hand inside the box again; but, wishing to make the rooster give a few more exhibitions of his pluck, Tom amused himself, for a long time, by tormenting him with a stick. Finally, growing weary of this sport, he walked aft, where the fisher-boy was seated, silent and thoughtful. He was thinking over the events of the day, and wondering if the results would meet the young trader's expectations. Bob had made many and careful calculations concerning the very business in which they were then engaged, but his conclusions differed widely from those of Captain Newcomb's. Although he could not hope to share in the profits, if the experiment proved a success, or be

expected to bear part of the expenses, if it should be a failure, he was deeply interested in it. He hoped that Tom's bright visions would be realized, but he thought he had good reason to fear that his employer would lose money. The young trader, however, was not troubled with any gloomy forebodings. He looked upon what he had done as perfectly correct, and he was unusually merry over it. He talked, laughed, and sang; and was so full of his fun that he could not sit still, but kept walking backward and forward over the boat, stopping now and then to explain matters to Bob, who, he plainly saw, did not agree with him. He again gave a full description of the manner in which he intended to conduct his business, always taking as his starting-point the assumed fact that he would "be certain to make ten dollars over and above all expenses every trip;" and, standing on one of the thwarts, with his hands in his pockets, he was endeavoring, for the twentieth time, to make Bob "see through his grand scheme," when the fisher-boy suddenly pointed seaward, and interrupted him with—

"Just see there, captain!"

Tom looked in the direction indicated, and the sight that met his gaze drove all thoughts of business out of his head. A thick milk-white cloud, followed by one as black as midnight, was rapidly coming into view above the horizon, and, as the young trader looked up, he heard the low muttering of distant thunder. Captain Newcombe knew enough about storms to be well aware that the one then coming up promised to give him ample opportunity to test the sea-going qualities of his fine sloop. But he had no desire to be caught out

in that storm; and one, to have seen him at that moment, would have been satisfied that he was wanting in a quality that was very necessary to enable him to fill the position of commander of a vessel—namely, courage. He knew that they were in danger, for the Mystery was fully a mile and a half from the shore, and, if the storm overtook her with all her sails spread, she would be capsized in a moment. This knowledge seemed to deprive him of all power of action; for he stood looking at the clouds, and listening to the peals of thunder that every instant came more plainly to his ears, as if he was at a loss to know what course to pursue.

To increase Tom's dismay, he noticed that a vessel, which he had seen coming toward the harbor, had put about and was standing out to sea again, while her crew was engaged in taking in the topsails, and making every thing snug on board. Tom knew, by this, that her captain, deeming it unsafe to attempt to reach the harbor, which was a dangerous one to enter during a gale, had started seaward, intending to "lay off and on" until the storm should abate. When Captain Newcombe saw this maneuver, he knew that he ought to be doing something also; but the sight of that black cloud in the west disconcerted him, and he could not keep his wits about him long enough to determine what ought to be done. It was an easy thing to be master of a vessel in calm weather, but when a storm was brewing the case was different.

"Captain," said the fisher-boy, "there's the hurricane you whistled for this morning."

"O, no," drawled Tom; "now, don't lay that on to me,

for I did n't whistle for as hard a one as this is going to be; I said I only wanted a little one."

"Well," said Bob, "I believe now that whistling will get up a storm. "We'll be in a bad fix if we do n't find shelter somewhere very soon. What shall we do, captain? Give your orders."

"O, I 'm sick," answered Tom, looking up at the cloud, which seemed to rise more rapidly. "You be captain, and if any thing happens you can call me."

Tom's terror was great, but his pride was greater. He did not wish to acknowledge his utter inability to give the necessary orders, so he resorted to this expedient, to shift all the responsibility on Bob's shoulders; and he thought that he was acting in a perfectly honorable manner; for, while he was on board the Savannah, he once heard the captain say to the first mate: "I am very unwell, and I wish you would take charge of the vessel; carry as much or as little sail as you please. If any thing happens, call me." The captain then went down into the cabin, and kept his bed for two days, during which time the first mate sailed the schooner. So Tom, with this example before him, thought that he had a perfect right to turn the command of the Mystery over to his mate, if he chose to do so, and no one could question his motives.

Bob, at first, did not wish to take charge of the little vessel, but Tom insisted, saying:

"I will lie down here in the stern-sheets, and if any thing happens, you can call me." And, suiting the action to the words, he stretched himself out at full length, and rested his head on his hands, as if he were very ill indeed.

"Well, then," said the fisher-boy, "if I am the captain, I shall shape her course toward the shore and take in that topsail and flying-jib."

"Do as you like," replied Tom; "carry as much or as little sail as you please. I 'm sick."

The fisher-boy accordingly headed the Mystery toward the beach, and, again turning to Tom, said:

"Now, if I am the captain, you must be the crew."

"O, no," whined Tom, "I can't."

"Well, somebody must be the crew," said Bob, looking rather anxiously toward the clouds. "Go aloft and take in that gaff topsail."

"O, I can't," answered Tom. "Suppose the storm should come up before I got down, it would blow me overboard."

"Then you steer the boat, and I 'll do it."

"I can't do that either; I 'm sick."

Bob was amazed, and utterly at a loss to know how to act. Those sails must come in, the sooner the better; for the chances were not one in ten that the Mystery could reach the shore, before the storm would burst upon them in all its fury. He was the captain of the vessel, but he was powerless, for his crew would not obey his orders, and he had no means of enforcing his commands. He could not leave the tiller, in order to take in the sails, neither could he lash it fast; for what little wind there was, was shifting, and somebody must be at the helm, in order to keep the sloop headed toward the shore.

For the first time, Bob felt a little alarmed, and, for a moment, he sat calculating his chances for reaching the shore, should the boat be capsized. But

he knew that was no time for such thoughts. The question then was, How to save the vessel and cargo? The fisher-boy imagined that could be easily done, if Tom would only wake up and lend his assistance. But how was he to arouse the young skipper, who was so disgracefully deserting his vessel and crew, at a time when his services were most needed?

"Captain," began the fisher-boy.

"O, I am not the captain, now, I tell you," interrupted Tom. "You are the master of the Mystery. Do as you please."

"But I must have help," said Bob. "I can't do every thing alone. If we don't take in those sails very soon, we shall be swamped."

"I can't help that," said Tom, looking up at th. clouds with a most pitiful countenance.

"You must help it. What would you do if you were in the water, a mile and a half from the shore?"

"O, I don't know. I 'm sick."

"You must work for your life, if you are sick," said the fisher-boy.

Tom, however, made no reply, neither did he move from his position. Bob began to be discouraged. If the fear of losing his life would not induce the young trader to put forth some exertion, it was probable that nothing would. But there was one subject still untried, and at that moment it occurred to the fisher-boy.

"Captain—I mean Tom," said he, "if we do capsize, what will become of your eggs, and butter, and your fine game chickens? You 'll have to look for your ten dollars profit at the bottom of the sea."

"So I would!" exclaimed Tom, straightening himself

up, all his sickness vanishing in an instant. "I can't afford to lose those game chickens. They're worth more than ten dollars to me. But, Bob, this is my last trip up the bay, I can tell you."

The fisher-boy had succeeded in waking Tom up at last. The latter knew that not only his fine boat, but even his own life was in danger; but it was not until Bob reminded him of the loss he would sustain in his game chickens, in the event of the Mystery's capsizing, that he got up, ready to lend assistance.

"Now, then," said Bob, as the young trader took hold of the tiller, "hold her steady, and I'll take in that gaff topsail."

The topsail had formerly been arranged so that it could be spread or taken in from the deck; but this did not "look enough like a ship" to suit Tom, who, after considerable trouble, had made it as near as possible like the topsail of a schooner; so that when he wanted it taken in, some one had to go aloft to do it. It was sport for Tom to ascend the mast in fair weather, when the Mystery was made fast at her wharf; but he did not dare to attempt it at sea, in the face of a storm; so this duty devolved upon the fisher-boy, who went aloft, took in the sail, and threw it to the deck. Tom took more pride in his boat than in any thing else, and he always liked to see the canvas neatly stowed away; and had it been fair weather, he would have scolded Bob for not doing the topsail up properly But an indistinct moaning sound, which came faintly to his ears, told him that the storm was rapidly approaching, and he was so terrified, and so anxious to reach the shore, that he hardly noticed the condition the sail was in. The fisher-boy

then descended to the deck, and, in a few moments more, the flying-jib was securely stowed away, and a double reef taken in the mainsail. Then, after placing all the boxes, baskets, and pails under the thwarts, as much as possible out of the way, he again took his seat at the helm, which Tom readily gave up to him.

It was not Bob's intention to land on the beach; for there, when the storm came, the Mystery would be in danger of being knocked to pieces by the waves, which always ran high during a gale. He had resolved, if possible, to run into a little cove about three miles from the village, where they could find safe anchorage for their vessel, let the wind blow never so hard. The fisher-boy thought he should be able to accomplish his object; for, as he took the helm, a slight breath of wind—the forerunner of the storm—filled the sails, and the Mystery began to move more rapidly. Stronger and stronger grew the breeze, causing the little vessel to careen, until she stood almost on her beam-ends, and straining the mast until it seemed about to break. Never before had the Mystery made such an exhibition of speed; but, fast as she went, the boys saw that the storm gained rapidly, and presently Bob pointed out a long line of foam in the horizon. The gale was fast approaching, and a few moments more would decide whether they would enter the cove—the mouth of which was but a short distance off—or be swamped on the beach. Nearer and nearer came the line of foam, stretching away on both sides of them as far as their eyes could reach; and finally, a strong gust of wind, which seemed to lift the little vessel fairly out of the water, filled the sails, and drove her toward the beach with great speed. Tom thought all was lost,

and throwing himself flat in the bottom of the boat, expected every instant to find himself struggling in the water. He felt the sloop rise, as she was lifted on the crest of a tremendous billow, heard the shrieking of the wind through the shrouds, accompanied by a loud roar, as the wave broke upon the beach, and presently the Mystery's keel grated harshly on the sand—Bob having safely piloted her behind a friendly point, and run her upon the shore, out of reach of the storm.

CHAPTER X.

TOM'S GAME CHICKENS.

THE fisher-boy had not performed a very heroic nor yet very difficult task in taking the Mystery safely into port; and Tom, when he had straightened up and looked about him, began to feel ashamed of himself. His pride, however, would not permit him to acknowledge that he had acted cowardly; so, as soon as he saw that the vessel and cargo were safe, he exclaimed:

"Well, we did bring her in all right, did n't we, Bob? I knew we could do it."

Had the Mystery been a few minutes later in reaching her shelter, it is probable that not even Bob could have saved her from being dashed upon the shore; for, no sooner had they reached the cove, than the storm burst forth in all its fury. The wind blew a perfect gale; the waves broke upon the beach with deafening roars; the clouds were lighted up with almost incessant flashes of lightning, which were accompanied by terrific peals of thunder, that had the effect of convincing Tom that, perhaps, they were not yet altogether safe.

The fisher-boy made no reply to Captain Newcombe's remark; but, after making the sloop's painter fast to a tree on the shore, he hauled down the mainsail and

proceeded to spread it over the boat, to protect the cargo, and also to afford them a shelter from the rain, which soon began to fall in torrents. Captain Newcombe and his mate then crawled under the sail; and, as was invariably the case with Tom, when every thing did not go off smoothly, he began to grumble. He was the most unlucky boy in the whole world, he said. Every one else got along easily, and without the least trouble, but whenever he attempted any thing, something always happened to bother him. He knew he could n't be a trader before he commenced, and that would be his last attempt at speculating. If Bob would give him fifteen dollars, he might have the whole cargo, game chickens and all. He would sell it for five dollars less than he had intended to ask for it, for the sake of disposing of it then and there, as he was fully resolved to retire from business. But fifteen dollars was a much larger amount than the fisher-boy ever had in his possession at one time, and, besides, (although he did not say so,) he was rather inclined to believe that the cargo was not worth so much money.

At the end of two hours the storm was over, and the waves had abated sufficiently to allow the Mystery to continue her voyage. Tom, although he retained the name of captain, allowed the fisher-boy to have things all his own way; and, when he found himself sailing toward the village once more, he began to recover his usual spirits. He again thought of his profits; how grand he would feel when he should inform his father that he had made just ten dollars that day; how all the boys of his acquaintance would envy him, and he finally concluded that a trader s life was not so bad after all.

Half an hour's sail brought them to the village, and the fisher-boy, in obedience to Captain Newcombe's orders, landed on the beach at his own home. As soon as the boat had been made fast to the shore, Bob's wagon, with its shrieking wooden wheels, was again brought into requisition, and the fisher-boy began the work of discharging the cargo. As the articles, one after another, were brought out on the beach, Tom was astonished to discover that there was another incident in the life of a trader of which he had never dreamed. It had never occurred to him to think what he would do in case his cargo should be damaged; but now the question was presented to him in such a manner that it could not be avoided. He found that a great many of his eggs were broken. No doubt the damage had been done, either while they were going into the cove or coming out of it. The butter, also, was not in as good condition as it was when they left the farm-house. The rolls were broken, the cloth soiled, and the pail in which it was packed, having, by some means become uncovered during the storm, was half-filled with water. In fact, the only part of the cargo which did not seem to be injured, was the rooster, which crowed loudly, as Bob picked up the box and carried it to the shore. The fisher-boy was dismayed, when he came to examine into the condition of things; but Tom, who stood on the beach with his hands in his pockets, had suddenly discovered a way out of his difficulty.

"Never mind, Bob," said he; "I'll charge more for the eggs that are left than I intended to in the first place, and then I'll sell those game chickens if I can

get three dollars apiece for them. That would be—let me see—how much for the lot?"

"Nine dollars," answered Bob.

"Well, I gave three dollars for them," continued the young trader, "and I shall make by the operation, just—just—let me think a moment."

"Six dollars," said the fisher-boy.

"Yes, that's right," said Tom. "Then it will take (and here the young trader, being deeply interested in his calculations, forgot himself, and began to count his fingers) seven—eight—nine—ten. It will take just four dollars more to make up the ten dollars. I shall certainly clear that off the butter and eggs. Now, don't you see where my ten dollars profit is to come from?"

Although the fisher-boy answered in the affirmative, he did not quite agree with Tom, for the thought occurred to him that, perhaps, he might not be able to sell his chickens at such a high price. However, he made no remark, and as soon as he had loaded his wagon with the eggs, he started off for Mr. Henry's store. Tom waited until he was out of sight, and then went around by the wharf as before; and, when he arrived at the grocery, Bob had already been there, unloaded his wagon, and gone back to the boat after the rest of the cargo. The grocer met the young trader as he entered the store, and, after inquiring how he had weathered the storm, called one of the clerks to count the eggs. Tom stood by, looking on, and relating his adventures to the merchant—being very careful, however, not to say one word about the disgraceful manner in which he had deserted his vessel and crew in time of danger—and, when the eggs had all been counted, he found that he

had just fifteen dozen whole ones left; six dozen had been broken during the storm. As the young trader stood looking intently at the floor, trying his best to determine how much he ought to ask for the eggs that were left, in order to make good what he would lose on the broken ones, the fisher-boy returned, bringing the game chickens and the butter.

"Those are fine looking chickens, Tom," said the grocer. "How much do you ask for them?"

"Three dollars apiece!" was the answer.

"Three dollars apiece!" repeated the merchant, in surprise. "You mean three dollars for the lot."

"No I don't," replied Tom. "I mean just what I said—three dollars apiece—nine dollars for the lot."

"That's too much! You surely did not give that price for them?"

"Of course not!" replied Tom. "If I had, I would n't sell them for that. I want to make something, do n't I?"

"Certainly! But you want to make too much. I'll give you fifty cents apiece for them."

"No, sir!" said Tom, emphatically. "I can't sell them for a cent less than three dollars each."

"What makes them so valuable?" asked the grocer.

"Why, they're first-class game chickens," replied Tom. "Do n't you want them?"

"Not at your price. I am not speculating in game chickens now."

"Well, *I* am," said the young trader. "They are worth three dollars apiece to me, and I'll keep them before I'll sell them for a cent less."

While this conversation was going on, one of the clerks had weighed the butter, and, when Mr. Henry

had been informed of the number of pounds, he leaned his elbows on the counter and said:

"Now, then, Tom, you have fifteen dozen eggs and ten pounds of butter. Is that right?"

"Yes, that's correct; but I'd like to have you take those game chickens."

"I can't give your price for them," repeated the grocer. "Now, how much are the eggs and butter worth?"

The young trader did not know what reply to make to this question, for the breaking of six dozen of his eggs, and Mr. Henry's refusal to take his chickens at three dollars each, had completely upset all his calculations. He wanted to make ten dollars by his day's work, but he did not know how much to ask for the eggs and butter to clear that amount. He would have been very much relieved could he have had a few moment's conversation with the fisher-boy; but, by such a proceeding, he would certainly show his ignorance, and that was something he did not wish to do. He could see but one way to act; so, after looking about the store for a moment, and putting on a serious face, as if busily engaged in making calculations, he turned to the grocer and asked:

"What do you think my cargo is worth?"

"Well," was the answer, "although that butter is rather mussed up, I will give you full price for it—thirteen cents a pound."

Down came all the bright hopes of the young trader, who started back from the counter in astonishment, and looked at the grocer as if he could hardly believe that he had heard aright.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Mr. Henry.

"Thirteen—did—did you say *thirteen* cents a pound for that butter?" Tom almost gasped.

"Exactly! Butter is very plenty now, and that is all it is worth—thirteen cents."

Tom was now convinced that the merchant was in earnest; and so astounded and vexed was he to discover that his grand attempt at speculating had failed, that it was with the greatest difficulty that he could refrain from crying.

"Did you pay more than that?" asked Mr. Henry, who plainly saw what was the matter.

"O, yes," drawled Tom, "I paid more than that. I paid too much."

"Prices have fallen lately, you know," said the grocer.

"Then I'll keep that butter until they rise again," said Tom, in desperation. "How much do you pay for eggs?"

"Ten cents," was the answer.

"O, no," drawled Tom. "I can't sell for that."

The store was full of customers; and at this moment the grocer left Tom, to attend to the wants of a gentleman, who appeared to be in a great hurry to transact his business, and the young trader determined to seize the opportunity to do a little calculating. He knew that if he accepted the price offered by the merchant, he would be a heavy loser, and he was anxious to know the full extent of his losses. Beckoning to the fisher-boy to follow him toward the office, he whispered:

"I am afraid I can't make *quite* ten dollars, aint you? Now ten pounds of butter, at thirteen cents a pound, that makes—let me see."

"A dollar and thirty cents," said the fisher-boy.

"O, I can't sell that good butter for such a small price as that," whined Tom. "That farmer swindled me, did n't he? He said that butter was the best in the country. And now, fifteen dozen eggs, at ten cents a dozen, that makes—just — "

"A dollar and a half," said Bob.

"And that makes the butter and eggs worth—worth—"

"Two dollars and eighty cents," said the fisher-boy, who knew that he was expected to do all the calculating; "and you paid six dollars and ninety cents for your cargo, taking out the price of your game chickens. So you lose just four dollars and ten cents."

"O, that 's too much!" said Tom. "If I was to lose that every day, that would be—let me see—how much a week?"

"Almost twenty-five dollars," said Bob.

"That 's too much!" exclaimed Tom, again. "I can't afford to lose that. I'll keep my things until prices rise again. Bob, put the cargo into your wagon, and take it up to the house. I knew I could n't be a speculator. I'm the most unlucky boy in the whole world, and something 's always happening to bother me."

Tom was now thoroughly disgusted with trading, and he resolved that, as long as he lived, he never would attempt it again. As he started to leave the store, the grocer inquired:

"Well, what do you say?"

"I say I can't sell at your prices," was the answer; and, in a moment more, Tom was taking long steps toward his home. He did not stop to speak to any of his numerous acquaintances he met on the streets, for fear

they might ask him how he was succeeding in business; and not until he reached home, and closed the gate behind him, did he feel safe. As he walked slowly toward the house, he glanced in at the door, and saw his father, seated in the library, reading his paper, and Tom knew that he still had a most difficult task to perform. Mr. Newcombe, of course, would want to know all the particulars of the voyage; and, at that moment, the young trader would have given even his game chickens to be able to avoid the interview. But that was impossible, for his father discovered him as he came up the lawn, and called him into the house. Tom obeyed, and the moment he entered the room, Mr. Newcombe saw at a glance that he had made another failure.

"Well," he exclaimed, "I suppose you have cleared a small fortune to-day?"

"O, no, I have n't, either," whined the discouraged young trader. "I 'm afraid I shall lose lots of money Did n't I tell you I could n't be a speculator?"

"Did you allow somebody to cheat you?" asked the merchant.

Tom saw that his father was determined to know all about the matter, and thinking that the sooner it was over with the better, he drew his memorandum-book from his pocket, and turned to the bill he had made out. His feelings, as he presented it, were very different from what he had that morning imagined they would be. Then. he was confident that he should be able to tell his father he had made money by his day's work; instead of that he had been a heavy loser.

Mr. Newcombe took the book, and as he glanced over the list of articles that had comprised Tom's cargo, he

saw in an instant where his son had made his mistake.

"What's this!" he exclaimed, "twenty-one dozen eggs, at — why, Tom, twenty cents for eggs!"

The unpleasant interview was over much sooner than the young trader had expected. His father did not read all the bill, but, closing the book, returned it to Tom, and resumed his reading. He saw that his son was in no humor to talk about what he had done, nor to listen to advice regarding his future operations.

Tom, who had expected a long lecture, was glad, indeed, to escape so easily, and, putting the book into his pocket, he walked out of the house, and started toward the barn, where he sat down to think over his day's experience, and to await the arrival of the fisher-boy. The latter came at length, with his wagon loaded with eggs. A place was cleared for them in one end of the oat-bin, and there they were packed away to remain until the market prices should rise. Bob then returned to the store, and, in due time, came back with the butter and the game chickens. The butter was also packed away in the oat-bin, the cover of which was closed and fastened.

"There!" exclaimed Tom, "that's all right. I have n't lost my money yet. Eggs and butter will be higher next winter, and then I'll show you a trick or two in speculating. Now, the next thing is to drive all father's chickens into the hen-house, and shut them up. I want to let my game rooster out."

But driving the chickens into the hen-house was a much harder task than the boys had anticipated. Having no desire to be shut up before night, they found

secure retreats under the barn; and, after half an hour's chase, during which only one solitary hen was captured, Tom's patience was exhausted.

"Never mind them, Bob!" he exclaimed, panting hard after his long run. "We have tried to put them out of harm's way, and now they must look out for themselves. If they knew what they were about, they would get into that hen-house as soon as possible. Now, Bob," he continued, as he stood with a hammer in his hand ready to knock the bars off the box in which the rooster was confined, "we must name this fellow before we let him out. What shall we call him?"

Bob proposed several names which he thought would be appropriated, but they did not suit Tom, who finally said he wanted to call his chicken after some great general.

"Name him Washington, then," said the fisher-boy.

"That's the name!" exclaimed Tom. "Come out here, General Washington," and, with a few blows of the hammer, he knocked off the bars, when out walked the rooster and the two hens.

They seemed to be well satisfied with their new quarters; and the rooster, as if to carry out the designs of his master, flapped his wings and crowed, to announce to all the fowls within hearing that he had come there to take possession.

He had a pair of good lungs, and Tom fully expected that his crowing would be sufficient to frighten every thing in the yard into submission, and that the General would be permitted to assume the honors of champion without a single battle. But the old residents of the barn-yard had no intention of allowing the

new-comer to lord it over them, for scarcely had Washington ceased his crowing, when an answer came from under the barn, and, the next moment, out popped a very small specimen of a bantam, bristling all over with rage and excitement.

"Drive him back, Bob!" shouted Tom; "drive him back! He's too small! He'll certainly get hurt!"

But the bantam had not come out there to be driven back. Dodging the cap which Tom threw at him, he spread his wings, thrust out his neck, and made at the intruder as if he meant to annihilate him on the spot. Washington was evidently astonished. He stood perfectly still, looking at his diminutive antagonist first with one eye, then with the other, and, just as Tom was expecting to see him assume the offensive, and drive the bantam from the field, the General uttered one long, deep cackle, and turned and took to his heels.

This was the last feather on the camel's back. Every thing had gone wrong with Tom that day. He had been offered ten cents a dozen for eggs for which he had paid twenty cents, and had been assured that the butter for which he had given twenty-two cents was worth only thirteen, and he had, as he imagined, borne up bravely under it all. But to stand there and see his game rooster—one for which he had paid a dollar, and of which he had hoped such great things—to see him disgracefully leave the field when faced by an antagonist that he could almost swallow—that was too much; and Tom, filled with disappointment and vexation, seated himself on the ground and cried aloud.

CHAPTER XI.

TOM DECIDES TO BE A FARMER.

THE fisher-boy was astonished at this exhibition of weakness on the part of his employer, and it is difficult to say whether he most pitied or despised Tom. He had all the while been confident that Captain Newcombe would, sooner or later, discover that he had set his mark altogether too high, but he had not expected that his failure, to carry out his splendid scheme, would so overwhelm him.

"O, it's no use, Bob," whined the discomfited trader, as he rolled about on the grass; "it's no use; I knew I could n't be a speculator. I am the most unlucky boy on earth. Something is always happening to bother me, and nobody in the whole world has so much trouble as I do. It's enough to discourage any body. But I knew just how it would turn out. I say, Bob," he added suddenly, looking up at the fisher-boy through his tears, "I've learned one lesson to-day, and that is, it's no use for a fellow to try to do a thing when he knows he can't succeed. I always said it, and now I know it's so."

The fisher-boy listened to this speech in perfect astonishment. He remembered how confidently Tom had talked of his success during the voyage, and how per-

severingly he had labored to convince his doubting mate that there was no possible chance for failure; and he could not understand why the young trader had so suddenly changed his opinion. If he knew that his scheme would result in failure, why had he risked his money in it? But this was nothing unusual with Tom. One day he would be raised up to the highest pinnacle of joy and excitement, by some wild project that entered his head, and to which he held in spite of all that could be said against it; and, perhaps, in an hour from that time, he would be plunged in the lowest depth of despair, by the failure of his scheme. On these occasions, he always endeavored to console himself by saying: "Did n't I tell you it would n't work? I knew all the time just how it would turn out." He never acknowledged, even to himself, that he was wrong; and, in the present instance, could he have discovered the slightest excuse for so doing, he would have laid all the blame upon the fisher-boy.

Bob did not feel called upon to make any reply to Tom's speech, so he walked about the yard; and, for want of something better to do, began to whistle.

"I see you do n't sympathize with me," said Tom. "Well, I ought not to be surprised at it, for nobody ever cares a red cent whether I succeed or fail. It 's just my luck. I do n't want you any longer. I owe you a dollar, and I 'll settle with you in the morning."

As this was a gentle hint that his presence there was no longer desirable, Bob took leave of his employer, and started for home, pulling his wagon after him.

As soon as he was out of sight, Tom arose to his feet, thrust his hands into his pockets, and began to walk

about the yard. He had concluded that he had seen enough of a trader's life, that he would never again attempt to play the part of speculator, and the usual question then arose: To what should he turn his attention next? He was balancing between three things—Mr. Henry's store, the military school, and a farm. Tom had often wished that he could be a grocer, especially if he was sure that he could get along through the world as smoothly as Mr. Henry; for he was a man who did not work. He always went about the store in shirt sleeves, evidently keeping an eye open to all that was going on; but Tom had never seen him roll a barrel or measure out a bushel of potatoes. Such work was always performed by the clerks; while the grocer himself seemed to have nothing to do but take in his money, and stand before the counter with his hands in his pockets talking with his customers. If Tom could have gone into the store with the same privileges, or even as clerk, it is probable that he would have decided to do so; but there was one serious obstacle in his way, and that was, the ridiculous custom so common among business men, of requiring an inexperienced person to begin at the lowest situation and work his way up. He would be obliged to build fires, sweep out the store, and run errands. How would he look, walking through the streets with a basket of eggs or butter on his arm? That was something his pride did not allow him to do.

Then there was the military school; and on this question Tom, as he had done a hundred times before, debated long and earnestly. Would the pleasure he would experience in wearing the academy uniform, make amends for the trouble and inconvenience that would

be occasioned by difficult lessons and strict discipline? Would the glory he would win in fighting Indians on the plains, after he had graduated from West Point, repay him for the dangers to which he would be exposed? It would be a fine thing for him if he could become the captain of one of the academy companies, and sport his shoulder-straps about the village, but here he discovered two obstacles that had often stood in his way—arithmetic and geography.

In his frequent conversations with the students of his acquaintance, in regard to the manner in which affairs were conducted at the school, he had made anxious inquiries concerning the different branches taught there, and had found, to his disappointment, that those he so much despised received their full share of attention. It made no difference to the teachers of the academy what business a boy intended to follow, arithmetic and geography were regarded as very necessary to his success; and two hours each day were devoted to these studies, until the professors were satisfied that the students had thoroughly mastered them. Tom thought he could not stand this, so the idea of attending the military school was again reluctantly abandoned. His only resource, then, was farming; and just then, Tom thought it was the "very business he had always wanted to go into." There would be no books to trouble him, and no teacher to say, "Thomas, you will remain after school, and recite that arithmetic lesson." He would escape all these very disagreeable things, and would have nothing to do but drive horses, milk cows, and spread hay, and that would be fun for him. As usual, Tom managed to work himself up to the highest pitch of excitement, and he

imagined all sorts of pleasant things that would happen, if he could only become a farmer. But he had little hopes of being able to carry out his idea; for, as his father "did n't want him to enjoy himself, if he could help it," it was not at all probable that he would give his consent. And here Tom showed how inconsistent he was. He had told the fisher-boy that he had that day learned a lesson which he never would forget, and that was, that when he knew he could not succeed in any undertaking, he would not waste time in trying. But now, although he repeatedly said to himself that he "knew his father would not let him go on a farm," he resolved to try to obtain his permission. Having made this resolution, and settled it in his own mind, that his future happiness depended upon the success of his new scheme, he walked toward the house and entered the library. His father had finished reading his paper. and sat gazing intently at the carpet, as if he there hoped to find a solution to some problem that he was revolving in his mind. As Tom seated himself in a chair at his side, he looked up and inquired:

"Well, how do you like trading? Do you find as much sport in it as you expected?"

"O, no, father; there is n't any fun in it," was the answer. "I do n't like it at all. I 've quit the business Did n't I tell you I could n't be a trader?"

Mr. Newcombe had heard this expression so often that he took no notice of it.

"Let me see the list of the goods you bought," said he.

Tom accordingly produced his memorandum-book; and while searching for the bill, Mr. Newcombe found

the "Contract and Shipping Articles" that the young trader, in anticipation of complete success in his speculations, had drawn up that morning. After considerable trouble he got at the sense of the document, although, on account of the miserable writing, he could not decipher all the words; and when he found how high Tom's lively imagination had carried him, he did not wonder that his failure had discouraged him. After reading over the list of articles that Tom had purchased, and noting the prices he had paid for each, he inquired:

"What in the world induced you to give so much for your cargo? You certainly did not expect to make any thing?"

"O, now, yes I did," drawled Tom. "I expected to make at least ten dollars to-day. I did n't want to cheat that farmer. If I had been in his place, I would n't have sold my things for less than what I offered him. But I 'm sorry I dealt so fairly with him, because he swindled me badly."

"In what way?" asked Mr. Newcombe.

"In those chickens," answered Tom, almost ready to cry again. "He said that rooster beat every thing on his place, like two hundred; but he can't whip any thing. Your little bantam drove him out of the barn-yard. He 's the biggest coward I ever saw. I wish I had n't named him General Washington."

"Well," said the merchant, after a pause, "you say you have concluded not to do any more trading. What are you going to try your hand at next?"

"I want to be a farmer," said Tom. "That 's just the business I have always wanted to go into."

Tom had expected a strong and decided opposition to

this project, and he was prepared to meet it with a host of arguments. But, to his surprise, his father merely nodded his head, and then sat gazing at the carpet, without making any reply. Tom was delighted, and he hoped that, for once, his father was willing that he should "enjoy himself."

"May I go?" he asked, eagerly.

"That depends upon whether or not you can find any farmer who is willing to take you," answered the merchant.

"But do you say that I may go, if I can find a place?" asked Tom, impatiently. "That's what I want to know."

"The matter rests entirely with you," was the reply. "But how long do you suppose it will be before you will wish yourself at home again?"

"O, not for a long time! Of course I shall visit you as often as I can; but, if I once get into the country, I shall always be a farmer."

"We'll see," said the merchant. "But, Tom, if you are trying to find some business in which you will have no work to do, and where there will be nothing to trouble you, you may as well give it up first as last, because you'll never find it. You will discover a great many things in a farmer's life that you will not like."

"O, I know all about that," said Tom, shaking his head in a very knowing manner. "I know just what I'll have to do. I'll have to drive horses, and milk cows, and do all that kind of hard work, but I don't care. I'll see Mr. Hayes the very next time he comes to town."

Mr. Hayes was the man whose fine horses had at-

tracted Tom's attention during the previous winter, and whom he had asked if he "did n't want to hire a boy." The farmer had done considerable business with Mr. Newcombe; and Tom, having often conversed with him, had finally learned to look upon him as one of the finest men in the world. His face always wore a good-natured smile, and, when he met Tom, he always gave his hand a gripe and a shake which he felt for half an hour afterward. Besides, he always inquired very particularly into Tom's affairs, and never forgot to ask—

"When be you goin' out home with me? You 're jest the chap I want; an', if you 'll go, I 'll make a first-class farmer of you in no time. You look like a smart little feller, an' I know my boys would be mighty glad to see you."

Of course this won Tom's heart; and when he received his father's permission to carry his new idea into execution, he did not feel as if he were leaving home to go among entire strangers, but as if he were about to take up his abode with those with whom he had long been acquainted.

"Very well, then," said Mr. Newcombe; "it 's settled, I suppose, that you are to be a farmer. You had better pack your valise, for I expect Mr. Hayes down in the morning."

Tom would have been much better pleased had his father informed him that the farmer was already at the door and waiting for him, so impatient was he to be off. He could not postpone the packing of his valise until morning, so he posted off to his room, pulled one of the drawers out of his bureau, and tumbled its contents upon the floor. If Tom wanted to find a handkerchief

or a collar, this was generally the way he went about it. From among the numerous articles in the drawer, he selected three fine shirts, a box of collars, half a dozen handkerchiefs, a bottle of cologne, several towels, a piece of soap, and a brush and comb. These he crowded into his valise, without the least regard for order, and then went into a closet, that opened off his bed-room, after a pair of boots. But Tom had already been there once before that day, looking for his fish-basket, in which he wished to carry his provisions for the trading voyage, and, as a consequence, the closet presented a scene of the greatest confusion. Pants and coats had been taken down from their pegs and thrown upon the floor, so that it was almost an impossibility to distinguish one garment from another, and, with these, were mixed up fish-poles, ball-bats, books, and the wreck of his little fire-engine, which, in his hurry, he had literally smashed to pieces.

"O, now, just look at this," drawled Tom, as he commenced pulling over the articles, and throwing them out into his bed-room. "How can a fellow find a pair of boots in a muss like this, I'd like to know? Here's one of them—now where's the other? I do wish folks would let my things alone."

The search was a long and tedious one; for, after every thing in the closet had been thrown into the bed-room, the missing boot had not been found. Finally, Tom pulled his bed into the middle of the floor; and this movement revealed another scene of confusion. Articles of every description were mixed up in all conceivable shapes, and among them, Tom at last found his boot.

"It's lucky that I pulled that bed out," said he to himself; "for here are lots of things that I thought I had lost. Here's one of the Mystery's oars, that I accused Bob Jennings of stealing. I'll put it right here, behind the door, so that I'll know just where to find it the next time I want it. There's my favorite ball-bat, that I thought Gus Miller had carried off. Here's my fish-line, with which I once knocked off old 'Squire Thompson's new stove-pipe hat. Wasn't he mad, though? And here— well I declare, if here is n't my jack-knife! I thought that was gone up, sure. I'll put it into my pocket, for I may need it to cut switches, to drive the horses with."

Thus enumerating the different articles which he discovered, Tom found the boot of which he was in search, and which he put into his valise, after wrapping it up in one of his clean shirts. Then the other boot was missing; he had put it somewhere, and could not find it.

"Now, just look at that," whined Tom, as he took his stand in the middle of the room, and gazed despairingly at the numerous piles of clothing that lay scattered about the floor. "Something's always happening to bother me. I always was the most unlucky boy in the whole world."

Tom began to throw the clothing back into the closet, violently shaking each garment before he did so, and the missing boot was finally found on the bed. His farming outfit was now complete, with the exception of a pair of black broadcloth pants, and a jacket, which were found, after considerable trouble, and crowded into the valise, which was so full that it could not be closed. Besides, the key was lost. But Tom did not intend to

look for that, for he might as well have searched for a needle in a hay-stack, as to endeavor to find so small ar article as a key in his room. However, he did not need it. Placing the valise flat upon the floor, he kneeled upon it, and, exerting all his strength, succeeded in bringing the handles so close together that they could be tied with a string.

"There," said he, with something like a sigh of relief; "that job is done. And now, I 'm all ready to be a farmer. I wish Mr. Hayes would come to-night, for I do n't like to wait. When I get ready to do a thing, I want to be at it."

Tom carried his valise down stairs, and placed it in the hall, near the door; and then, walking out on the lawn, gave himself up to the delights of dreaming.

"This is the business for me," he soliloquized. "I 'll be certain to succeed; for if I did n't know it, I would n't attempt it. What is there to prevent my being a farmer, I 'd like to know? I 'll have no arithmetic or geography lessons to learn; no writing to work at; no figures to culculate; no trading to do; no second mate to bother me; no boots to black, or beds to make up; and no wood to saw. Now, hold on a minute," he added, shaking his head, doubtfully; "I do n't know about that. Farmers must have wood, and, perhaps, Mr. Hayes will want me to keep his galley-stove in fuel. No, sir; I won't do it. Before I hire out to him, I 'll be particular to ask him if I shall be obliged to saw wood; and if he says 'yes,' I won't go. I 'll look around and find some other farmer that wants a boy. But if he says I need n't saw wood, I 'm all right. I ought to be able to learn all about this business in a

short time, and then I'll ask father to buy me a farm and stock it for me. Then, perhaps, I might be as lucky as that man in Iowa I heard father talking about the other day. He has six thousand acres of land, and, in one year, he sold two thousand head of cattle and twenty-five hundred sheep. He does n't do a stitch of work, but employs all his time in riding about his farm on horseback. Now, two thousand head of cattle, at—say ten dollars apiece; that would be—would be—I wish Bob Jennings was here to tell me what it would amount to, so that I might know how much I would make if I had a farm like that."

As these thoughts passed through Tom's mind, he suddenly paused in his walk, and then catching up his cap, which he had thrown under one of the trees, he ran into the house, exclaiming:

"Father, will you please lend me a dollar until to-morrow? I want to pay Bob Jennings what I owe him, and if I wait until morning, he may be off to his fishing-grounds before I can see him."

Tom hesitated as he said this, for he knew that he had not told his father the real object he had in view; so, after a moment's reflection, he added: "I want to talk to Bob on business."

Mr. Newcombe laid down his paper, produced his pocket-book, and handed the required amount to Tom, who at once started for the home of the fisher-boy. He found Bob engaged in bailing out his scow, preparatory to starting for his pier after the workmen.

"Here's your dollar," said Tom, as he approached. "I though I would n't wait until morning, for I am going into the country; I'm going to be a farmer."

"A farmer!" repeated Bob, as he took the money and put it carefully away in his pocket. "Do you think you will like that business?"

"Like it! How can I help it? I'll make plenty of money, too, one of these days. Now, Bob, sit down here," continued Tom, as he seated himself on the gunwale of the scow. "There is a man somewhere out West, who sold in one year two thousand head of cattle, and two thousand five hundred sheep."

"He was a farmer, was n't he?" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes, he was, and that's just the kind of a farmer I am going to be one of these days."

"But, Tom," said the fisher-boy, "have you given up all idea of going to sea?"

"Of course I have," was the answer. "I never wanted to go to sea, only just long enough to make one voyage; but I always did want to be a farmer. I'd rather follow that business than be captain of the best man-o'-war afloat. Now, two thousand head of cattle, at ten dollars each; that would make—let me see."

"Ten dollars," repeated Bob. "You would n't sell beef-cattle for that small price, would you? That man may have shipped them to some Southern market, and received forty or fifty dollars each for them."

"That's more than I thought cattle were worth," said Tom. "Now, two thousand head, at fifty dollars each; that makes just—just—"

"A hundred thousand dollars," said the fisher-boy.

"That's lots of money, is 'n't it?" asked Tom. "Now, twenty-five hundred sheep, at two dollars a head; I heard father say that was the market price, but I would n't

sell for that, if I owned any. However, we'll say two dollars; that would make—let me think—"

"Five thousand dollars," said Bob.

"And that all makes—makes—"

"One hundred and five thousand dollars."

Tom whistled long and loud.

"Now, would n't you rather be a farmer than a sailor?" said he. "You could n't make as much money as that by going to sea, if you should live to be a thousand years old."

"How did your father get his start in the world?" asked Bob; "was n't it by going to sea, and saving his money?"

"Yes, but that 's too slow work. Besides, we all have different talents, you know. You were made to be a sailor; so was your father before you; but I was cut out for a farmer; and I 'm going to be one, too. Good-night, Bob; I must go."

"I've found the very business at last," said Tom to himself, as he walked homeward. "A hundred and five thousand dollars a year, and nothing to do but ride around on horseback and look at your property. Is n't that glorious! Would 'nt I feel proud if I could see so many cattle and sheep feeding in one of my fields, and could say: 'They 're all mine! They 're worth a hundred and five thousand dollars?' Whew! I 'm bound to be a farmer."

CHAPTER XII.

TOM'S NEW HOME.

TOM was so full of his glorious ideas for the future, that he could scarcely sleep at all that night; and, when he did, he dreamed of droves of cattle, prancing horses, and sheep without number.

Morning came at length, and, contrary to his usual custom, he was up at daylight; but he had six long hours to employ in some manner before he could see Mr. Hayes, for the latter would not reach the village before ten o'clock. He passed the time until breakfast in walking about the yard, enjoying the bright prospect before him, and then he went down to his father's office, where he impatiently awaited the arrival of the farmer. The hours seemed lengthened into weeks; and, so impatient was Tom, that he could neither sit still, nor stand still, even for a moment. He would walk once or twice across the office, then run out into the street and closely scrutinize every wagon within the range of his vision, all the while saying to himself: "Now, I wonder what keeps that man? He ought to have been here an hour ago!" Half-past ten came at length, and with it arrived the farmer, perched upon his heavily-loaded wagon, his face all wrinkled up with smiles, as

if he felt well satisfied with the world and every body in it, himself in particular. Tom did not wonder that he was always laughing; when he owned a farm, and four fine horses, he would laugh too.

The farmer stopped his team in front of the office, and, as he sprang down from his wagon, he was met by Mr. Newcombe, who, leading him off on one side, held a long and earnest conversation with him, while Tom stood by almost bursting with impatience. At length the farmer approached him, and, as Tom grasped his huge hand, he almost shouted—

"Mr. Hayes, I am going home with you!"

"Human natur'! Be you, though?" exclaimed the farmer. "I'm glad to hear you say so."

"But, first," continued Tom, "I want to ask you one question. Must I saw wood?"

"O, no," answered Mr. Hayes, laughing, "I've got a strappin' big boy to do all that ar' kind of work."

"That's all right!" said Tom, immensely relieved. "That's one point settled. Now, I shall charge you eight dollars a month! That's what I received when I was a sailor, and I can't work for a cent less. Will you pay it?"

"That's a big price for a chap as do n't know nothin' 'bout farmin'," said Mr. Hayes. "But we won't quarrel 'bout a few dollars. It's a bargain."

"Then I'll go with you!" said Tom, delighted that his demands had been so readily complied with. "I knew I'd suit you. Won't I have a jolly time milking cows and driving horses!"

"Sartin!" said the farmer, who seemed as highly elated as Tom himself.

"Now, then," said Mr. Newcombe, who had stood by listening to this conversation, "go home and bid your mother good-by. By that time Mr. Hayes will have his wagon unloaded."

Tom at once started for home at the top of his speed; and so eager was he to return to the farmer as soon as possible, that he took leave of his mother in a very hurried and unceremonious manner. Catching up his valise, he ran back to the office, where he arrived just as Mr. Hayes was returning from the store-house with his empty wagon.

"Back again so soon," said he, with one of his good-natured smiles. "What a mighty good boy you'd be to run errands!"

Tom doubted this; but being too much out of breath to reply, he put his valise into the wagon, and accompanied the farmer into the office. As soon as Mr. Newcombe had paid him for the fifty bushels of potatoes he had just brought in, he was ready to start.

"Good-by, father!" said Tom. "I'm off, now. I'll know something about farming when I come back!"

"That's true as natur'," said Mr. Hayes. "I'll take good care on him, an' I'll l'arn him to raise taters as good as 'em I just sold you."

The farmer climbed into his wagon, gathered up his reins, cracked his whip, and Tom was whirled off toward his new home.

The boy's cup of happiness was now full to the brim. After a life of disappointments, the wheel of fortune had at last made a revolution in his favor. That something which he had waited for so long, had finally "turned up," and from that time forward he would find

no obstacles in his way—there would be nothing to trouble him. He felt as if he were about entering upon a new existence; and he regarded his former life as utterly wasted. He forgot the sorrow and vexation that had been occasioned by his recent failure; and when he remembered that he had been weak enough to shed tears when he discovered that his game rooster was a humbug, he could not help feeling ashamed of himself.

In order to give Mr. Hayes an idea of the object he had in view, Tom told him the story of the stock raiser in Iowa, which made the farmer open his eyes wide with astonishment.

"How much would so much stock sell for?" he asked.

Tom settled back in his seat, put on a very thoughtful look, and answered—

"Two thousand head of cattle at—we'll say fifty dollars each, for that is about the price paid now in Southern markets—would amount to one hundred thousand dollars; and twenty-five hundred sheep, at two dollars ahead, would bring just five thousand dollars, making, in all, one hundred and five thousand dollars."

"Human natur'!" exclaimed the farmer, looking at Tom, in amazement. "You're a lightnin' chap on figures, that's sartin. I could n't reckon up so much in my head if I should try a month. If my boys could do that, I'd feel 'nation proud of 'em. But, Tommy, it aint every farmer or stock raiser that can make so much money."

"O, there's nothing in the world to prevent it," said Tom, knowingly. "Wait until I have been with you

long enough to know something about this business, and I'll show you how to manage a farm."

"I never see a chap so anxious and willin' to learn that did n't make a great man!" said the farmer, who little dreamed that Tom was utterly lacking in some very necessary qualities. "You're bound to get through the world all right. Now, if you'll l'arn my boys to reckon figures in their heads as fast as you did a minute ago, I'll do the right thing by you. Will you do it?"

This question made Tom a little uneasy. He never went into the company of strangers that he did not endeavor to impress them with the idea that he was a very smart boy. He had already made a most favorable beginning with the farmer, who regarded him as a "lightning calculator;" and, if he had stopped at that, without asking him to put his knowledge to a practical use, he would have been satisfied. But Mr. Hayes had hinted that he would like to have him instruct his boys, and Tom suddenly found himself in a predicament from which he could then discover no way of extricating himself without injuring his reputation.

"Well, Tommy," said the farmer, at length, "we won't say nothing more about it just now. I know you could l'arn my boys an amazin' heap if you would only try, but I s'pose you feel a leetle funny 'bout bein' called on to play school-master. Howsomever, we'll wait till we get home, an' you're fairly settled in your new quarters. You must n't look on my boys as strangers, 'cause they aint. They have often heered me speak of you; so you can pitch in an' be as friendly as you please. They'll be glad to see you, an' when you come to get acquainted with 'em, I know you'll like

'em. You'll find that things is divided at my house, just as they had oughter be. Sally Ann—that's my old woman—she is boss of the kitchen, an' I'm boss of the barn-yard. She's got nothing to say 'bout the way I take care on my hosses an' cows, an' I don't bother my head 'bout what goes on in the house, or grumble 'bout the way the butter an' cheese is made. You see, when things is divided that way, there aint no quarrelin an' fightin'. Every thing goes along smooth an' easy—just like clock-work. Now, Tommy, you drive. You need n't think we're going to work you hard just now," he continued, as Tom took the reins and whip from his hand, "'cause it aint to be thought on. You're fresh from the village, where you never had no hard work to do; so we'll give you something easy till you kinder get used to it."

The more Tom talked with Mr. Hayes, the more delighted he became with his prospects. He thought that if he could only conjure up some plan by which he might be able to avoid teaching the farmer's boys, he would have nothing to trouble him. Especially was he pleased to learn that he was not expected to do any hard work. Besides this, he was already enjoying the "sensation" which he hoped to make in the farmer's family, and it was for this reason that he had packed his valise with his best clothes. According to his idea, his broadcloth jacket would go a long way toward establishing his claim to respect, and would have the effect of convincing the country boys that a village youth was something extraordinary.

After a three hours' ride, during which the farmer gave his new hand a long lecture on the manner in

which corn and potatoes ought to be planted and cultivated in order to produce large crops; every word of which, it is needless to say, was Greek to Tom. He pointed to a house in the distance, saying: "Now, we're comin' to our home. All this land you see here on this side of the road belongs to me. I've got two hundred acres of just as good ground as ever laid out of doors."

As the farmer spoke he took the reins from Tom's hand, cracked his whip, and, in a few moments, drove through a gate, which was opened by a barefooted, dirty little urchin, who gazed at Tom with every expression of wonder and curiosity. If he was a fair specimen of the farmer's boys, Tom did not think that he should be very well pleased with them. Mr. Hayes kept on, and, instead of driving to the barn, turned up toward the house, and stopped his team in front of the door. Tom was astonished at the sight that was presented to his gaze. The door-way was crowded with boys of all ages and sizes, the oldest apparently about nineteen years of age, and the youngest about three. They were all hatless and shoeless; the larger ones had their sleeves rolled up above their elbows, revealing arms as brown as their faces, while the younger ones carried in their hands huge slices of bread and butter. Behind them, looking over their shoulders, stood their mother, evidently as much interested in the new-comer as her children. She was a tall, muscular woman, with sharp nose, long chin, and small, piercing eyes; and as Tom looked at her, he began to doubt the truth of the farmer's statement—that her authority was bounded by the four walls of the kitchen. He thought it very probable that he should discover

that her power was exercised over every one on the farm. Tom took all this in at a glance, for the moment the wagon stopped the farmer sprang out, exclaiming:

"Now, then, we 're to home. Sally Ann, this is our new hand—Tommy Newcombe. Get out of the way, boys; where are your manners, that you stand gapin' at a feller that way? Let us come in."

The woman merely nodded to Tom, and after wiping off a chair with her apron, requested him to "set down."

"Now, then," exclaimed the farmer, as the boys crowded up around Tom, and stared at him as if they meant to look him out of countenance; "here 's my youngsters—seven on 'em; aint they a fine-lookin' lot of fellers? This one," he continued, pointing to the oldest of the group, a tall, gaunt, stupid-looking boy, "he 's Roger Williams—Roger Williams Hayes; you 've heered of him, hain't you? Shake hands with him, Tommy, and be friends."

Tom arose to his feet and extended his hand, which was accepted by Roger Williams, whose thoughts seemed to be entirely occupied with Tom's clothes. After looking at his coat for a moment, he examined it with his fingers, and asked, in a slow, drawling voice:

"What's sich a coat as that ar' wuth, Tommy?"

"Roger Williams!" shouted the mother; "where 's your manners? Set down to onct."

The boy evidently feared to disobey, for he retreated to a chair in the corner, where he sat, lost in admiration of Tom's jacket and well-blacked boots.

"You 've heard of Roger Williams, haint you?" continued the farmer; "of course you have. I must get you to tell my boys all about him some time, 'cause you

can do it better 'n I can. When I was a youngster I heered that he was a good man, an' that he was kicked out of the country 'cause he did n't like the Britishers. I don 't like 'em nuther, an' that 's why I call my boy Roger Williams. This one," he added, pointing to another of the group, "he 's George Washington Hayes. Of course, you know all 'bout the gen'ral he 's named after. If he only lives to be as great a man as he was, I shall be satisfied. This one is John Warren, named after the gen'ral that was killed at the battle of Bunker Hill. My grandfather was in that fight, an' helped whip the Britishers; that 's why I call him John Warren. This boy is Franklin Pierce, a good chap to work, and the best l'arnt in the whole family."

Franklin Pierce was about Tom's age, barefooted and dirty like his brothers; and, as his father pulled him in front of the village boy, he slowly surveyed him from head to foot, exclaiming: "I 'll bet a five cent piece that I can throw you down, back hold or square hold—fair tussle."

"I do n't fight," replied Tom, drawing a little closer to Mr. Hayes for protection.

"Now, sonny, do n't; that 's a good little feller," said the farmer, coaxingly.

But the boy evidently prided himself upon his muscle as well as upon his learning; for he stepped forward, as if to seize Tom, when he was suddenly checked by the shrill voice of his mother.

"Franklin Pierce!" she shouted; "I'll take the wagon whip to you, sure and sartin, if you do n't pay more attention to your manners."

The boy instantly ceased his hostile demonstrations,

and retreated to the door, where he stood in readiness to seek safety in flight, should his mother attempt to put her threat into execution.

"Now, this one," continued the farmer, as if nothing had happened, "he's Winfield Scott; an' there's Zachary Taylor—both on 'em named after the two gen'rals that walloped the Mexikins. An' that little feller there," pointing to a child the mother held in her arms, "he's Thomas Jefferson. I heered that he was the man that writ the Declaration of Independence, an' started the Fourth of July; so I thought, as he was a great man, I had oughter name one of my boys after him. My youngsters have all got good names; an' if they only do as well in the world as them they are named after, I shall be satisfied."

The farmer introduced his boys, one after the other, so rapidly that it bewildered Tom, who shook each of them by the hand as they were presented, scarcely comprehending what he was about. The namesakes of the illustrious heroes of the Mexican war had their hands full of bread and butter; and, when they were brought forward by the proud father, Tom just touched their greasy hands with the tips of his fingers.

After the boys had all been introduced, George Washington and John Warren were sent out to take care of the horses, while the others again crowded up around Tom, as if they looked upon him as an object of great curiosity—all except Franklin Pierce, who still stood in the door, now and then shaking his head threateningly, as if challenging the village youth to come out and measure strength with him.

As the farmer had predicted, the boys proved to be

very friendly—in fact, they were altogether too friendly; for Winfield Scott, after placing his bread and butter carefully upon the floor, made several desperate attempts to climb upon Tom's knee—a proceeding which the latter successfully resisted by pushing back his chair.

Had Tom been left alone in the room for a few moments, he would have cried with vexation. He was no longer as confident of success as he had been but a short time before; for he found his new home very different from what his imagination had pictured it. He even thought seriously of returning to the village at once, and of giving up all hopes of ever becoming a farmer. He did not like to have so many children, with greasy hands, about him; for he was very neat in regard to his dress, and the smallest particle of dust upon his boots or clothes would set him on nettles. He was not at all pleased with the way Franklin Pierce eyed him; for, if he should happen to catch him away from the house, he might insist on making good his wager, that he could throw Tom down. Above all, he did not like the looks of the "boss of the kitchen." He already began to fear her, for he had seen enough to satisfy him that she was not only mistress of the house, but of the entire farm also; and, if he should happen to incur her displeasure it was probable that she would not hesitate to threaten even him with the wagon whip. Beyond a doubt, Tom had again placed himself in a very unpleasant situation.

CHAPTER XIII.

LIFE ON A FARM.

TOM was allowed very little time for reflection, for the shrill voice of the mother speedily broke in upon his meditations.

"Now, boys," said she, "where's your manners? Get chairs an' set down to onct. You, Franklin Pierce, quit shakin' your head that ar' way. You need n't think that Tommy is goin' to wrastle with you, an' be tumbled round in the dust an' mud, with his fine clothes on. He's a gentleman, he is; an' I want all you boys to watch him, an' do just as he does. I'm so glad you have come," she added, turning to Tom, "for maybe our boys'll learn manners, now. They're all good boys, but they're so wild an' playful like. I have a heap of trouble to make 'em behave themselves proper, like they had oughter do."

"Dad, dad!" screamed Zachary Taylor at this moment, scrambling up the steps into the house; "that John Warren won't let me ride Dobbin to water. Make him do it, dad."

The farmer, however, paid no attention to his son's complaint, but sat gazing out at the door, as if he was not aware that he had been spoken to. The boy then appealed to his mother.

"Now, mam," he cried, "I want to ride Dobbin."

"You, John Warren," screamed the mother, with all the strength of her lungs, "let your little brother ride that ar' hoss to onct. I'll take the wagon whip to you, sure an' sartin."

Zachary, confident that he had gained his point, ran out of the house again; and, a few moments afterward, Tom saw him ride toward the barn, triumphantly mounted on Dobbin. The mother, seeing that her orders had been obeyed, again turned to Tom.

"Mr. Hayes tells me that you 're a high l'arnt boy," said she; "an' I 'm glad to hear it, 'cause we won't need to send our boys off to school now. We lose their work every winter, an' that 's something we can't afford to do. We want you to take 'em in hand, an' l'arn 'em figures an' sich. It haint never done George Washington an' John Warren no good to go to school; 'cause last winter, they thrashed the teacher, an' the deestrict committee turned 'em out doors. They haint never been to school none since. Somehow them boys never did get along; but they 're good boys, an' I can manage 'em easy enough. When you 're l'arnin' 'em I 'll allers be 'round; an' if they do n't behave themselves proper, I 'll make 'em."

"Besides," chimed in Mr. Hayes, "you 're just the chap I want to do my writin' an' figurin'. Whenever I pay out any money, or take any in, I allers set it down in a book, so that at the eend of the year, I know jest how much I have made. I 'll have to get you to show me how to do it proper. I never did have much edication, but I 'm bound that my boys shall all be smart men. They 're all got good names, an' if they only do

as well as them they are named after, I shall be satisfied."

Tom listened to this unfolding of the farmer's plans in utter bewilderment. His desire to create a sensation in Mr. Hayes's family had been fully gratified; but he did not enjoy it as he had expected he would, for it was more than overbalanced by two most disagreeable features in his new home, which made him very uneasy. He did not like the boys, for they were very different from those with whom he had been in the habit of associating; and he was dismayed to learn that he was expected to act as school-master. The longer he listened, the more he became aware of the unpleasant fact, that Mr. Hayes' object in bringing him into the country, was not so much to teach him the science of farming, as to secure a book-keeper for himself, and an instructor for his boys.

The farmer and his wife, like most country people, thought that a boy who had always lived in a village, where he had access to the best schools, ought to be well posted in all the different branches; but Tom himself knew that they were sadly mistaken in him. However, he determined not to confess his inability to perform all that was required of him; but when the time for action came, he would trust to his wits to help him out.

"Franklin Pierce," said the farmer, at length, "did you an' the boys get all that hay raked up this morning, like I told you?"

"Yes, dad, we did," answered the boy, seizing the opportunity, when his mother did not happen to be looking toward him, to shake his head at Tom.

"Wal, then, Sally Ann," continued Mr. Hayes, "if you 'll give us some dinner, we 'll go to work."

"Franklin Pierce!" shouted the mother, (she seemed to have been so long in the habit of screaming at the top of her lungs, that it had become a kind of second nature to her,) "come here an' 'tend to Thomas Jefferson, while I get dinner."

While the meal was being prepared, Tom accompanied the farmer to the barn, and then to the hay-field, followed by all the boys, who did not seem to want to lose sight of the new-comer. They appeared to be intensely interested in him; and Tom carried himself very stiffly, certain that he had made a profound impression upon his new acquaintances. But he soon found that he was mistaken in this, for Franklin Pierce, who had followed them to the field, dragging his little brother after him, found opportunity to whisper in his ear:

"You think you are some, don't you? I 'll bet I can throw you down—square hold or back hold!"

Tom, however, very prudently declined to accept the challenge. He was opposed to any unnecessary exertion, and it was not his ambition to be considered the "champion wrestler."

After Mr. Hayes had satisfied himself that the boys had performed their work properly, and that the hay was ready to be taken into the barn, he led the way to the house, where they found dinner waiting for them. When the meal was finished, the farmer arose from his chair, saying:

"Now, Sally Ann, where's Tommy's carpet-bag? He wants to put on his workin' clothes!"

"Why, these are all the working clothes I have with me," said Tom. "Those in my valise are better than these I have on."

"Law sakes!" exclaimed the woman, "you aint goin' into the hay-field with them nice trowsers an' boots on? You'll ruin 'em, sure an' sartin."

"Wal, 't aint no ways likely that the boy knowed any thing 'bout the work he would have to do," said the farmer, kindly. "I'll be goin' to the village ag'in day after to-morrow, an' he can go with me, an' bring out some clothes fit to work in."

Tom, then, in accordance with the farmer's suggestion, pulled off his jacket, tucked his pants into the tops of his boots, and was ready to begin operations. The two oldest boys went to the barn to harness the horses, while Tom, imitating the farmer's example, shouldered a rake and started for the hay-field. He had always thought that raking hay was easy work, and, no doubt he would have found it so, had he been permitted to have his own way. But the farmer and his boys worked as if they were in a great hurry to get through, and, in order to keep pace with them, Tom was obliged to exert himself to the utmost. Animated by a desire to show the country boys that a village youth could do any thing, he worked hard for fully half an hour; and when, at the end of that time, he stopped to wipe the big drops of perspiration from his face, he reluctantly came to the conclusion that he had again mistaken his calling.

"I know what's the matter," said Tom to himself. "I made a mistake in coming out here with Mr. Hayes. I ought to have hunted up some stock raiser and gone

home with him. I am never going to be this kind of a farmer; so every day I stay here I am wasting time."

"Come, Tommy," said Mr. Hayes, "don't you see that shower coming up? It's goin' to rain afore long; an' if this hay gets wet again, it will be dollars out of my pocket. Handle that rake jest the least bit faster."

But the hay did not get wet. The farmer had a strong force, and, when the shower came up, the last load was safely housed in the barn.

"Wal, sir, we done it, didn't we?" said Mr. Hayes. "Now, that hay is worth twelve dollars a ton—I've got 'bout thirty ton, an' that's worth how much, Tommy?"

The time for action had arrived much sooner than Tom had expected it would. He had not decided what he would do when called upon to make an exhibition of his powers as a "lightning calculator," and the farmer's question was so sudden and unexpected that, for a moment, he did not know how to act. But it was only for a moment, for happening to cast his eye toward Franklin Pierce, an idea struck him, and he seized upon it at once.

"Can you tell how much it would amount to?" he asked, turning to the "best l'arnt boy in the whole family."

"I reckon!" replied Franklin Pierce. "But can you?"

"What a question!" answered Tom, evasively. "A two-year old boy ought to do it. But I don't believe you can."

"Wal, now, I'll mighty soon show you!" said Franklin Pierce, and, picking up a chip, he marked the figures upon the ground, and commenced: "Twelve times

nothing is nothing," said he. "Set down the nothing. None to carry. Twelve times three is thirty-six. Set down the thirty-six. Dad, your hay is worth three hundred and sixty dollars."

"Is that right, Tommy?" asked the farmer, gazing proudly upon his son.

"Yes, that 's correct," said Tom; but, fearing that he had fallen in the farmer's estimation by not working it out himself, he continued: "He could n't possibly have made a mistake in a little thing like that. But after all, I did n't suppose he could do it."

"Wal, I done it all right," said Franklin Pierce. "I can reckon up a heap harder figures than them, an' I haint been to school much, nuther."

When the hay had been pitched off upon the scaffold, the farmer and his boys started toward the house, and, as Tom entered the door, he discovered something that filled him with astonishment and vexation. When he took off his jacket before going into the field, he had, contrary to his usual custom, hung it on a nail in the kitchen; but what was his surprise to find it in the possession of Thomas Jefferson, who, having succeeded in putting it on, was running about the house in high glee, with his fat, greasy arms buried to the elbows in the pockets. His valise, which he had placed upon a table beside the door, had been pulled off on the floor, and one of the young generals was engaged in overhauling its contents, while the other was endeavoring to pull on one of Tom's boots. The mother evidently did not regard this as a violation of "good manners," for she was at work in the kitchen, where she could see all that was going on, but she made no attempt to put a stop to it.

She was even laughing at the comical figure Thomas Jefferson presented in Tom's coat, the skirts of which swept the floor as he ran about. The village boy, however, did not regard it in the light of a good joke; for he walked up to the youngster, and endeavored to take the jacket from him, a proceeding which Thomas Jefferson resisted with furious yells.

"Now, dad," shouted Franklin Pierce, who seemed ready to take his brother's part; "just look at that ar' Tommy."

The farmer, however, took no notice of what was going on. He seemed determined to carry out his part of the contract which, as he had informed Tom, existed between himself and wife, and leave all difficulties that arose in the house to be settled by the "boss of the kitchen." But the mother, as usual, heard the appeal, and shouted:

"Now, Tommy, let him have it, that's a good little feller; he won't hurt it."

Thomas Jefferson, finding that his mother espoused his cause, and probably knowing, by experience, that no one would dare oppose her authority, again began marching about the house. But Tom, never having been accustomed to such treatment at home, was not satisfied.

"Now, I want that coat, and I'm going to have it," said he, savagely.

"Tommy," said the woman, suddenly appearing at the kitchen door—a movement which made Tom retreat a step or two, as if he expected to find the wagon whip brandished over his head. "Now, Tommy, my boys is all honest; they won't steal your things, nor hurt 'em nuther. If I take 'em away from 'em, there'll be a yellin' an' hollerin' here that I can't stand, when my

head aches as it does to-day. They 'll soon get tired of your things, an' then you can take care on 'em."

Tom, although he was highly enraged, was obliged to submit to this arrangement; and, the other boys, finding that their mother was not inclined to oppose them, joined their brothers in an examination of the contents of Tom's valise. The articles, one after the other, were taken out and thrown upon the floor, and when every thing had been closely examined and criticised, they were tumbled back again in quite as good order as Tom had packed them in the first place. This was certainly an unlooked-for incident in the life of a farmer, and it served to confirm Tom in the opinion he had long entertained, that he was the "most unlucky boy in the whole world," and that "something was always happening to bother him."

The shower continued with unabated fury all the remainder of the afternoon, putting a stop to work in the hay-field, and compelling the farmer and his boys to remain within doors. Mr. Hayes passed the time in nodding in his chair, unmindful of the almost deafening noise occasioned by the boisterous games that were carried on in the house. Occasionally the sports would be interrupted with quarrels; and once, a rough-and-tumble fight took place between Franklin Pierce and John Warren, which was abruptly terminated by the appearance of the farmer's wife, when the contestants were obliged to take to their heels to escape punishment from the wagon whip. This wagon whip appeared to be the symbol of the mother's authority. She kept it hung up behind the kitchen door, where it could be readily seized at a moment's warning; and, from what

had just transpired, Tom regarded this precaution as absolutely necessary to the peace of the family.

The exhibition Franklin Pierce had given of his strength and pluck made Tom stand in awe of him, and sincerely hope that he might never be left alone with him even for a moment; but when the boys were sent up to bed that night, what was his dismay to discover that Franklin Pierce was to be one of his bed-fellows.

"Me an' you an' Winfield Scott has got to sleep together," said he. "Mind you, now, no crowdin', or I 'll tell dad."

Much to his surprise, however, the boy did not renew his overtures of battle; and Tom, contrary to his expectations, was allowed to sleep in peace. But after all, he got very little rest, for the bed was narrow, and Franklin Pierce, with a sharp eye to the comfort of himself and brother, had compelled Tom to sleep in the middle. The night was very warm, and when Tom endeavored to find a more comfortable position, he always succeeded in awaking Winfield Scott, who shouted:

"Now, dad, just look at that ar' Tommy; he's crowdin' me out of bed."

This would be followed by the caution from the room below:

"You, Tommy, quit crowdin'."

The night was a long one to Tom, and he scarcely knew how he lived through it. He arose the next morning cross and fretful, and, as if to add to his discomfort, the farmer, in laying out his programme for the day's work, assigned Tom a most disagreeable task.

"Me an' the boys will go to the hay-field," said he, "an' you, Tommy, as you haint never been used to hard

work, we'll give you an easy job. You may stay in the house an' help Sally Ann. She's got a big day's washin' to do, an' you will be of more use here than in the field."

"O, now, I did n't come to the country to learn to do washing," drawled Tom, as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment. "I can't do such work as that. I came here to—"

"Now, Tommy," interrupted Mrs. Hayes, "you can stay here just as well as not. Somebody has to help me, for I can't wash all them clothes, an' pack all the water from the spring, an' take care of Thomas Jefferson besides. You can't mow or spread hay, so you can just stay here an' help me."

Tom raised no more objections to this arrangement, for he knew that the farmer's wife sometimes had a very unpleasant way of enforcing her arguments; so, when Mr. Hayes and his boys started for the field, he remained at the house.

"Now, then, Tommy," said the woman, "we haint got no time to waste. While I am washing up the breakfast dishes, you take them two buckets, an' bring water from the spring. Run along lively, now, for we've got lots of work to do."

Tom, fearing to disobey, reluctantly picked up the pails and left the house. He walked slowly down the path that led to the spring, and reaching a spot where some bushes hid him from the house, he seated himself on the ground to think over the situation, and, if possible, conjure up some plan by which he might avoid performing the work that had been laid out for him.

"I might as well hire myself out for a washer-woman

at once," said he to himself. "What would Gus Miller, and Johnny Harding, and the other fellows say if they knew I had helped wash clothes and take care of children? O, I can't do such work. I'd rather take a whipping."

"You, Tommy!" came the shrill voice of the farmer's wife, breaking in upon his meditations; "have you gone to Newport after that water?"

Tom jumped up from the ground as if some one had suddenly pricked him with a pin. He had been gone from the house fully ten minutes, and the farmer's wife had begun to grow impatient. He had not yet decided what he would do; but the sound of the woman's voice seemed to quicken his ideas, for he suddenly made a desperate resolve. Hastily casting his eye back to the house, and then toward the hay-field, to satisfy himself that no one was observing his movements, he dropped the buckets as if they had been coals of fire, and started for the road at the top of his speed. Tom's playmates had never looked upon him as a very swift runner, but could they have witnessed the exhibition of speed he made at that moment, no doubt they would have thought it something extraordinary. He was but a very few moments in crossing the field and reaching the fence, over which he bounded as lightly as a cat; and, finding himself in the road, he started toward Newport with redoubled speed. He did not waste time in looking back; neither did he slacken his pace, until he reached the foot of a hill about half a mile from the house, when he turned off into the woods, and after concealing himself behind some bushes, sat down on a log to recover his breath.

"Thank goodness, I'm free once more!" said he, wiping his flushed face with his handkerchief, and panting hard after his long run. "I would n't go back there for a hundred dollars a month. Wash clothes and help take care of children! I do n't want to learn to be that kind of a farmer. What would the boys say, if they knew that I had got myself into such a scrape? Now, I wish I had my valise; but I would n't go back after it if those were all the clothes I had in the world."

Tom remained in his concealment but a very few moments, for, so fearful was he that the farmer, or one of his big boys, would follow him, and carry him back to the house, that he was anxious to reach home as soon as possible. It was sixteen miles to the village, and, under ordinary circumstances, Tom would have hesitated before attempting to walk such a long distance; but there was no alternative between that and returning to the house, and, of the two evils, he thought the task of making the journey to Newport, on foot, was the least. So, after looking cautiously down the road, to be sure that no one was following him, he came out of the woods and again set out. For the next two miles he continued to cast uneasy glances along the road behind him, holding himself in readiness to take to his heels again if he should discover any of the farmer's family following him, and finally he saw a wagon approaching. A close and careful examination satisfied him that it did not belong to Mr. Hayes; so he seated himself beside the road to wait until the team came up. The driver proved to be a man whom Tom had often seen in the village, and, as soon as he came within speaking distance, he asked if he might be allowed to

ride. Receiving an answer in the affirmative, he climbed up on the wagon, and was immediately assailed with innumerable questions by the farmer, who seemed very anxious to know what he had been doing, and where he intended to go. But Tom, although he had no fear that the man would take him back to Mr. Hayes', still thought it prudent to keep his own counsel, and gave evasive answers to all his questions.

The road to Newport seemed to have lengthened considerably since Tom last traveled over it; but they reached the village about two o'clock; and Tom, after thanking the farmer for his kindness, sprang down from the wagon, and made the best of his way homeward. He kept the back streets as much as possible, for his boots and clothes were dusty, and he did not wish to meet any of his acquaintances in that condition. He reached home at last, and, as he entered the hall, he met his father, who had returned from the office earlier than usual.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "NIGHT-HAWKS."

"AH, Tom!" exclaimed Mr. Newcombe, "I did not expect to see you home again so soon! How long is your visit to last?"

"Visit!" repeated Tom. "I am not here on a visit. I'm here to stay. I knew I could n't be a farmer."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the merchant.

"O, I was n't cut out for the kind of a farmer that Mr. Hayes is!" drawled Tom. "I did n't know that I would have to sleep three in a bed, or play schoolmaster, and I did n't go out there to help wash clothes or take care of children. I was n't made to be that kind of a farmer. I wanted to be a stock raiser, like that man in Iowa."

"Then you do not intend to go back to Mr. Hayes's," said his father.

"O, no, sir, I do n't," replied Tom, emphatically. "I would n't live in that family a month for all the property Mr. Hayes is worth."

The merchant did not appear to be at all surprised that his son had returned so soon, neither did he seem to be interested in the matter, for he turned and walked into his library, leaving Tom to himself. The latter ran

up to his room, brushed the dust from his clothes, blacked his boots, and sat down to determine what he should do next. He did not have another interview with his father until evening, when the latter called him into the library, and propounded the usual inquiry:

"Well, what are you going to do now? Do you still think that you will ever be able to find any business that will run along smoothly without any labor or exertion on your part?"

"O, no, I don't," replied Tom. "I always expect to have plenty of trouble as long as I live. I am the most unlucky boy in the whole world. I must either work or go to school."

"Exactly. Now which do you propose to do?"

"I don't know. I want time to think it over."

"Very well, then," said the merchant; "I'll give you two days. If, at the end of that time, you don't come to some sensible conclusion, I shall take the matter into my own hands."

"But, father, can't you give me some good advice?" asked Tom.

"Certainly I can. I'll give you the same advice I have given you a hundred times before. Go to school, study hard, stop saying 'I can't,' and try to make a man of yourself. That's my advice; and if you don't wake up and do something in earnest very soon, I shall do more than advise you."

"O, now, what's the use of going to school?" drawled Tom. "I never yet saw any fun there."

But Mr. Newcombe, as usual, did not seem inclined to argue the point, for he took some newspapers out of his pocket, thus intimating that it was not his intention to

say more on the subject. Tom was provoked, as he always was when his father brought these interviews to a close so abruptly; and, after loitering about the room for a few moments, in hopes that the merchant would resume the conversation, he picked up his cap and walked sullenly out of the house.

"I wish father did n't take any newspapers," growled Tom, as he seated himself on the portico; "for then I might have a chance to talk to him. He wants me to go to school. I can see that plain enough; but I won't do it if I can help it. I do n't like to be kept in at recess, or be told to remain after school every time I miss a hard arithmetic lesson. I must do something, however, and what shall it be? that 's the question."

As Tom said this, he settled back on his elbow, took a rapid survey of his situation, and tried hard to think of some easy, pleasant business in which he could engage, that would bring him pleasure and profit at the same time.

In thus allowing his son to have full swing for awhile, Mr. Newcombe considered that he was taking the easiest and shortest course to convince Tom that he was making a great mistake. If the latter was compelled to attend school, he would still cling obstinately to the idea that every moment he devoted to his studies was time wasted. The merchant had tried every plan he could think of to convince him to the contrary, but without success; and his last idea promised to be as complete a failure as the others. Some of Tom's playmates called him a "bull-headed boy," and his father thought that, by his conduct, he was establishing a perfect claim to the title. He had his own opinions concerning men and

things; and, al.hough his failures would sometimes bring tears to his eyes, they never served to convince him that he was in the wrong. On the contrary, he always tried to lay the blame upon somebody else, all the while endeavoring to console himself with the hope that some fine day something would "turn up" in his favor, and that after that he would get along through the world smoothly and easily. He had waited for it long and patiently; but now his patience was severely tried, for he knew that if that something did not "turn up" very soon, he would find himself in school again; for he was well aware that that was what his father meant by "taking the matter into his own hands."

Tom was sadly troubled with the "blues" again, and the only way he could think of to drive them off was to go down to the common and join the Night-hawks, who, judging by the shouts that now and then came to his ears, were out in full force. He was still considerably confused by the shock he had experienced when he discovered that another of his air castles had tumbled down about his ears—that his grand idea of farming was not exactly what he had imagined it to be—and thought an evening spent with the Night-hawks would serve to relieve his mind, so that on the morrow he would be better able to think over his troubles, and determine upon some course of action.

The law against going outside of the gate after dark was still in operation; but this did not turn Tom from his purpose, for he had evaded it so often without being detected, that the regulation had no terrors for him. If his father did not happen to want him, (and it was not at all probable he would, for, looking through the

window, Tom could see that the merchant was still deeply interested in his papers,) his absence would not be discovered. But, in order to make himself secure, Tom walked slowly into the library, threw down his cap, yawned several times, stretching his arms, and acting altogether as though he was very sleepy, and finally went up stairs to his room. After locking the door to prevent surprise, he went into his closet after another cap; the one he generally wore he had purposely left in the library. As his room had been put in order soon after he left for the country, the cap was soon found; when, noiselessly opening his window, Tom crawled out upon the porch, and, after satisfying himself that the coast was clear, slid down one of the posts and reached the ground in safety. Here he paused and listened for a moment, to ascertain if the noise he made had attracted the attention of any one in the house; but all was quiet, and Tom, congratulating himself upon the skillful manner in which his escape had been accomplished, and which, he thought, ought to entitle him to especial praise from his boon companions, the Night-hawks, moved silently down the lawn, and presently found himself in the street. There was now no need of concealment; and Tom, anxious to join his friends as soon as possible, broke into a run, and, in a few moments, reached the common. It had become too dark to continue the games, and the Night-hawks were gathered in a group, in the middle of the common, engaged in a whispered conversation. At short distances on each side of the main body were four boys, who walked back and forth, like sentinels on guard; and, in fact, they were sentries, whose business it was to notify the Night-hawks of the

approach of any "outsiders." This made it evident that the boys were debating upon some question which they did not want every one to know. As the Night-hawks are now about to assume a somewhat important part in our story, they merit a more extended description than we have thus far given them.

The society (for it was a society, and a secret one, at that) had its origin in the fertile brain of Tom Newcombe, and was certainly an institution. It was customary for the boys in the village to assemble on the common after school hours, and amuse themselves with various games; and some of the boys remained until bed-time. After dark, the game of ball gave way to "Hounds and Deers," and "Every Man to his Own Base;" and when these games had been played until all were tired of them, then came the question, "What shall we do next?" Among so many boys, of course there were some who were ready to propose plans for mischief, and others who were just as ready to assist them. At first, ringing door-bells, throwing down wood-piles, and removing gates, had been the favorite exploits; but these soon became "played out," and something more exciting was demanded, such as robbing orchards and melon patches, and the like. They did not care a cent for the fruit, they said, but it was "such fun." On several occasions the young rogues had been discovered, and some of their number fell into the hands of the enemy The captured ones proved themselves to be utterly unworthy of the confidence of their fellows, by revealing the names of all those who were engaged in the mischief. This made all the boys, and especially Tom, very angry; but it never occurred to him to con-

sider what he would have done had he been in the same predicament. It suggested an idea to him, and gave him something upon which to think and plan when he should have been studying his lessons. But if his geography and arithmetic suffered, the interests of his companions did not; for one day, after he had got his plans all matured, he startled some of his particular friends by proposing that a secret society be organized, under the name of the "Gentlemen's Club," of which he (Tom) was to be president. The idea was hailed with delight by the boys, who, having been given an insight into the objects of the society, set about hunting up recruits. None but those who were deemed trustworthy were admitted to membership, and the secret was closely guarded from all "Spooneys," who, for a long time, were not aware that there was such a thing as a Gentlemen's Club in existence.

In a few days the society was ready to begin work, and, the way it went about it, proved that Tom had not chosen a very appropriate name for his organization, for the conduct of its members bespoke them any thing but gentlemen. They commenced operations by marching, one night, in a body, to the residence of the doctor, where they proceeded to amuse themselves by carrying off the wood which was piled in front of his office. When their work was about half done, they were surprised, and their ranks thrown into confusion, by the sudden appearance of the owner of the wood, who flourished a heavy cane above his head, and, collaring one of the boys, pulled him into his office a prisoner. The doctor then demanded the names of all the boys who had engaged in the mischief, but, for a

long time, the discomfited member of the Gentlemen's Club refused to comply. But when the physician threatened to lock him up in the cellar, and keep him there all night, the culprit changed his tactics, and even endeavored to convince his captor that he alone was to blame for all that had happened—that it was merely a "little joke" which he wished to play upon the doctor, and that no one had assisted him in carrying off the wood. The doctor, however, declared that he "could n't swallow any such nonsense as that;" and, striking his cane upon the table, fiercely repeated the demand, when the prisoner, to save himself from bodily harm, astonished the physician with a complete description of the society, its signs and pass-words, and the object for which it had been organized. After a good deal of cross-questioning, in a very savage tone of voice, the doctor released his captive; not, however, without obliging him to promise, over and over again, that he would always endeavor to be a good boy, and that he would be particularly careful to let people's wood-piles alone in future.

The doctor was highly amused at what he had heard, and, although, while in the presence of his prisoner, he had appeared to be very much enraged, shaking his gray head, and thumping his cane violently on the floor, the moment the boy had gone, he threw himself into a chair and laughed until his fat sides ached. Considering the joke as too good to be kept, he repeated it to every one he met, and the Gentlemen's Club was "knocked higher than a kite." Tom, especially, had cause to regret that his companion had forgotten the solemn promises he had made, for almost every boy

that passed him on the street would touch his cap and salute him with, "How are you, President Newcombe?" But Tom, and several other prominent members of the club, were not discouraged. They soon organized another society—from which the faithless member of the Gentlemen's Club was, of course, excluded—with a new name, and different signs and pass-words. But this was also broken up by a member, who exposed the whole thing to revenge himself on Tom for something the latter had done. From the ruins of this society sprang the Night-hawks, which, being composed of those who, on more than one occasion, had proved themselves to be entirely reliable, had been in existence nearly a year, and, in spite of the efforts of "outsiders," its secrets had been faithfully kept.

It was understood by the Night-hawks, that the society had been organized for "mutual protection;" and a clause in their constitution declared, that when any member was known to be in trouble, it was the duty of all to hasten to his assistance. This clause had been introduced by Tom, who, at the time, could not have told exactly what he meant by it; but, perhaps, we shall see how the law, which was framed by accident, proved to be of great use to some of the Night-hawks.

The operations of the society were conducted with great skill; but it had not been long in existence, before some of the village people began to believe that the boys were bent on mischief, and nothing else; and when the knowledge of this fact got abroad, it threatened, for a time, to annihilate the society. Many of its members received orders to remain at home after dark, which some of them did; while others found means

to evade the law. Disobedience was considered an honor rather than a disgrace; and when a boy performed a feat like that which Tom had just accomplished, he was held up to his companions as an object worthy of emulation. This created a spirit of rivalry among the members, and, when any one performed an exploit worthy of especial notice, some one else always tried to outdo him.

The government of the society was purely democratic, the majority ruling; and another noticeable feature of the institution was, that there was not a single private in it, every boy being an officer of some kind. This idea had also originated with Tom, who thought that the general harmony and good feeling of the society might be best preserved by giving every member some authority. The highest office was that of grand commander of the council, which was the position Tom held, and the lowest was fifth corporal. The other officers were—commander, first colonel, second colonel, first and second major, captain, and so on down. Although Tom had the name of being the leader of the Night hawks, he was not so in reality, for the society was managed by Johnny Harding, who was nothing but a fifth captain. However, as Johnny was Tom's particular friend, there was seldom any trouble in the council. But the grand commander was, after all, a very important personage, for, as we have before hinted, he did all the work, and without him the exploits of the society would scarcely have been worth bragging about. In his case, at least, "ignorance was bliss;" for had he been aware of the fact, that he was merely a tool in the hands of his cunning playmates, he might not have been so proud of the position he held.

As Tom approached the group on the common, he increased his pace, for he saw that a council was being held, and that some question was being warmly discussed, for now and then some boy would speak in an angry, excited tone, which would be followed by a command to "silence that loud talking" from some officer of high rank.

"Who comes there?" called out one of the sentinels, when he discovered Tom approaching.

"Grand commander of the council!" replied Tom, with as much dignity as though he was answering to the challenge of some soldier, Major-General Newcombe!

The Night-hawks heard the answer, and the debate was adjourned without ceremony, while all the boys advanced in a body to meet Tom.

"Here you are at last!" said Johnny Harding. "You are just the very fellow we want. But what 's the reason you have n't been here to help us before? Have you been in the hands of the Philistines?"

(All "outsiders," such as parents, guardians, and all others who could exercise authority over the members of the society, were called Philistines.)

As it was several months since Tom had joined in any of the exploits of the Night-hawks, he had a long explanation to make, to which all the members listened attentively; and then he described the manner in which he had effected his escape from home, which, of course, interested the boys more than any thing else. When he had finished his story, the commander (the officer next in rank below Tom) said:

"You can't imagine how glad we are to see you, Newcombe. I believe that your appearance here to-night

has saved our society. We came very near breaking up in a row, because I proposed something which I thought was nothing more than fair. The question is: Has an officer of high rank—a colonel, for instance—any authority to command one lower than he—say a captain?"

This was a point upon which Tom had often debated, although he had never dared to propose it to the society; and, for his own part, he hoped that the question would be decided in the affirmative; for then their democratic form of government would be abolished, and he, being the grand commander of the council, would become supreme ruler. He could manage the society as he pleased, and whenever there was any dangerous work to be done, he could keep out of harm's way.

"I think it ought to be so," said he, after thinking a moment; "for what's the use of having any officers at all, if some are not allowed more authority than others? Let's put it to a vote."

This suggestion was at once acted upon, and the Night-hawks decided that one officer had no business to order another about; that such a course would certainly establish an aristocracy or a despotism, and that was something to which they would not submit.

"You are all wrong, boys," said the commander, who did not seem to be very well pleased with the result of the vote. "In carrying out our plans, some one must run a little risk; but now, how shall we decide who it is to be?"

"Newcombe is the man!" said Johnny Harding. "He's the strongest and bravest fellow in the society

He is not afraid of any thing. You 'll do it, won't you, Tom?"

"Certainly I will," replied the grand commander, who never could withstand such an appeal. "What is it?"

"Let us walk over this way, a little more out of sight," said one of the boys, "and then we can discuss the matter without fear of being overheard."

The Night-hawks moved off to the edge of the common, and, after the sentries had again been posted, they seated themselves on the grass to talk over their plans.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NIGHT-HAWKS IN ACTION.

BEFORE Tom's arrival on the common, the Night-hawks had been debating a knotty question. For nearly three weeks, the society had been inactive, not a single exploit having been performed to add to their glory; and one of the members, becoming weary of the monotony, had studied up a plan to "put a little life into the boys." The scheme he proposed rendered it necessary that some one should run considerable risk; and the trouble among the Night-hawks had been occasioned by the effort to decide who that some one should be.

It was proposed to present 'Squire Thompson—a crusty, nervous old gentleman, whom all the boys delighted in teasing—with some of his own fruit and vegetables. The 'squire lived in the village, but he owned a farm about two miles back in the country, and it was there the vegetables grew. In order to convey their present from the farm to the village, it had been proposed to "borrow" the 'squire's horse and wagon; and it was when the question arose, who shall be the one to go into the stable and harness the horse that the trouble began.

The Night-hawks were all delighted with the idea; but the difficulty was to find a boy courageous enough

to do the dangerous part of the work. They were quite willing, and even eager, to engage in the sport, but they did not like the idea of going into a man's stable after night, and "borrowing" his horse and wagon. It was a common saying among the members of the society, that "'Squire Thompson slept with one eye and both ears open;" besides, he kept two fierce dogs, and the chances were not one in ten that they could harness the horse, hitch him to the wagon, and escape without disturbing either the dogs or some member of the 'squire's family. It had at first been suggested that the commander should appoint some one to do the work; but the boys would not agree to this, neither would they allow the "forlorn hope" to be selected by ballot. In short, the scheme was in danger of being abandoned, when Tom's arrival showed the Night-hawks a way out of their difficulty. He was "just the man they wanted;" for he was "the strongest and bravest fellow in the party, and was n't afraid of any thing."

"Well, Tom, what do you think of it?" asked Johnny Harding, after he had explained the scheme, and described, in glowing language, the astonishment and vexation 'Squire Thompson would experience when he awoke the next morning and found his wagon before his door, loaded with onions, cabbage, peaches, and green pumpkins. "Would n't it be gay?"

"Yes," answered Tom, "*it* would be glorious. But who is to get the horse and wagon?"

"Why, you are, of course!" answered Johnny. "If you refuse, it will be the first time since we organized our society. You see, it's rather a difficult job, and no one but a very brave, strong, and skillful fellow should be

allowed to undertake it; for it is 'nt every boy that can go into a man's stable, harness a horse, and bring him out, without awakening some one. I acknowledge that I can't do it, but I know you can."

"Yes, Newcombe," chimed in several of the Night-hawks, "you're the only man in the party that we can trust. You know just how it ought to be done."

But Tom, just then, thought differently. He did not believe that he was the bravest and most skillful member of the society, neither did he like the idea of being obliged to secure the horse and wagon for the expedition, for he knew there was danger in it. But still, the thought of refusing to attempt it, never once entered into his head—that would injure his reputation, for it would show the Night-hawks that their grand commander was not half as brave as they had imagined him to be. So, summoning up courage, he replied, desperately:

"Well, I'll do it! I am not afraid of 'Squire Thompson, nor his big bull dogs either. But, before we go any further, I want one thing understood. If I succeed in getting the horse and wagon, I am going to do all the driving, and you must n't expect me to help load the vegetables when we get to the farm."

The Night-hawks, without hesitation, agreed to this arrangement, for they knew, that in order to succeed in their undertaking, they must allow Tom to have his own way in some things. They were delighted that he had so readily yielded to their demands, and, in high glee, they set out for 'Squire Thompson's house. They did not all go together, for, as it was only about half past eight o'clock, the streets were not yet deserted, and

the Night-hawks did not wish to attract attention by marching through the village in a body.

Tom, accompanied by Johnny Harding and two more of his particular friends, stopped to hold a consultation, when they arrived within a short distance of the house, while the others kept on up the road and sat down by the fence, to wait until Tom should bring out the horse and wagon. After a few moments' whispered conversation, Tom and Johnny decided that their first care must be to reconnoiter the premises, and ascertain exactly where the 'squire's team was kept. The coast was not altogether clear, for a light shone from the windows of the house, showing that the 'squire's family had not yet retired; and, as Tom and his companions approached, a loud, fierce bark told them that the dogs were on the watch. The stable was but a short distance from the house, and in the same yard, and Tom knew that his only chance for success was to devise some plan to occupy the attention of the dogs until he could perform the work allotted to him. The dogs evidently suspected that something unusual was going on, for they followed the Night-hawks as they moved down the fence, barking fierce and loud, as if to warn them that they intended to keep a close watch on all their movements. Tom appeared perfectly unconcerned, but the truth was, he was very glad indeed that there was a high fence between him and the savage brutes.

"To tell what's a fact, boys," said he; "I don't feel much like taking a hand in this business to-night. I have walked a long way through the hot sun to-day, and I've got a little touch of the headache. I believe I have sprained my ankle, too," he added, suddenly be-

ginning to limp, as if he found it exceedingly difficult to walk. "I can hardly move."

"That's too bad," said Johnny, offering his arm to support Tom. "But, Newcombe, I know you are too spunky to allow a sprained ankle or a little headache to stand between you and such fun as we are going to have to-night."

"It will soon wear off," said the others.

The Night-hawks understood the motives of their chief as well as he did himself, and it was plain that they did not intend to give him an opportunity to back out. Tom, being well aware of this, and seeing no possible chance for escape, again formed a reckless determination to go through with his part of the work, if within the bounds of possibility. They kept on down the fence until they reached the stable, and, as they walked slowly along, Tom made a close but rapid examination of the premises, and, to his delight, found the two principal obstacles which he had imagined would stand in his way removed. The horse had not been confined in the stable, but was quietly grazing in a small pasture adjoining the barn-yard. The wagon stood just inside the gate, and the harness lay upon the seat, where the 'squire had thrown it before turning out his horse. If the Night-hawks had had a faithful friend in the 'squire's family, who had been instructed to have every thing in readiness for the expedition, he could not have arranged matters more to Tom's liking.

"That's lucky, isn't it, fellows?" whispered Johnny, when he had noticed these two points. "It's just as we want it."

"O, it's all the same to me!" replied Tom, carelessly.

"If the horse and the wagon were both in the barn and locked up, I know I could get them out!"

Tom's courage always arose or fell in proportion to the number of obstacles he found in his way. Up to this moment he had been impatiently asking himself the question, how should he shirk his part of the work if he found the horse and wagon locked up in the stable? Had they been safe under lock and key, it is probable that Tom would have refused to proceed further on account of his lame ankle and severe headache; but when he found that they were in a position to be secured with very little difficulty, he forgot to limp, his headache left him as suddenly as it had come, and he became very courageous.

"Now, Newcombe," said one of the boys, when they had walked entirely around the 'squire's yard, and had thoroughly reconnoitered the situation, "how are you going to work it?"

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Johnny, who was always ready for any emergency; "we'll keep the dogs here, while Newcombe goes and gets the horse."

"But how are you going to do it?" asked Tom.

"With this!" replied Johnny, showing a stick, which he carried in his hand. "Every time the dogs start to go away, I'll pound on the fence with this cane. That will make them mad, and they won't leave here as long as we are in sight."

"I'd like to see that plan tried before I risk it," said Tom, doubtfully. "Perhaps it won't work."

As he spoke, he walked off toward the barn. The dogs followed him; but when Johnny rattled his stick between the pickets, they bounded back, and the larger

of the dogs made a desperate attempt to leap the fence to get at Johnny.

"They're savage, aint they?" whispered the latter.

"I should say they were!" replied Tom, his courage gradually melting away again. "Boys, my head aches awfully, and my ankle grows worse every minute."

"Never mind that!" said Johnny. "It'll soon wear off. My plan works first rate, don't it, boys? Go on, Newcombe; we'll agree to keep the dogs here."

"But, fellows," said Tom, who did not like to be required to do all the work alone, "one of you ought to go with me and help me pull that wagon out of the yard. It's too heavy for me!"

"O, nonsense!" exclaimed Johnny. "You're the strongest fellow in the party, and you could pull that wagon from here to the farm and back again, with all the boys in it. Go ahead, Newcombe! We'll keep the dogs here!"

"But suppose I can't catch the horse?" persisted Tom. "Perhaps he kicks or bites strangers."

"O, no, he don't. He's as gentle as an old cow. You'll have no trouble. Go on, Newcombe! We haven't got much more time to waste."

Tom, finding that the boys were determined that he should do all the work, at length succeeded in mustering up courage enough to start off alone. As he walked by the house, he glanced in at the window, the curtain of which was raised, and saw the 'squire, sitting in his easy chair, and the other members of his family gathered about a table, engaged in various evening occupations. The 'squire had, of course, heard the noise made by his dogs, but, thinking that they were barking

at persons who every evening passed by his house on the way to their own homes, he did not trouble himself about the matter.

After satisfying himself that none of the family had been alarmed, Tom again started off. Reaching the stable, he carefully unlatched the gate, and placed a stick of wood against it to keep it open; then, seizing the thills of the wagon, he prepared to make an exhibition of that tremendous strength which had won for him from the Night-hawks the name of being the "strongest fellow in the party." The wagon was not a heavy one, but it must have been rooted to the ground; for Tom, for a long time, exerted his muscles in vain. The grand commander, however, always worked harder and more perseveringly in a bad cause than he did in a good one, and at last the wagon moved; and after considerable pulling and grunting, Tom succeeded in drawing it through the gate into the road. After listening again, to be sure that no one in the house had heard what was going on, and that Johnny was still successful in occupying the attention of the dogs, Tom closed and fastened the gate; and again taking hold of the wagon, pulled it down the road toward the place where the main body of the Night-hawks were hidden behind the fence, impatiently waiting for him. Tom's spirits rose considerably when he found that he had successfully accomplished part of his work; and when the Night-hawks sprang from their concealments, and took hold to help him along with the wagon, he did not ask any of them to assist him in catching the horse. The numerous congratulations he received from his friends, who called him a "jolly old brick," and a "spunky boy," accompa-

nied by repeated assurances that they had always known that he was the "strongest and bravest fellow in the society," greatly encouraged him; and had the horse been locked up in the stable, he would not have hesitated to make the attempt to bring him out.

When they had pulled the wagon as far as the fence which bounded the lower end of the pasture, Tom ordered a halt, and taking the bridle out of the wagon, climbed over into the inclosure to catch the horse. This was a signal to the Night-hawks, who, thinking that there was still a chance for discovery, hid themselves behind the fence, or stood in readiness to run off, should the 'squire's dogs make their appearance. As for Tom, he had suddenly become very reckless, and he did not trouble his head about the dogs, or the 'squire either. The horse proved to be very gentle, as Johnny had said he would, and the grand commander had no difficulty in catching him and slipping the bridle over his head. He then led him up to the fence, a portion of which—it being built of rails—was thrown down by the Night-hawks, who again made their appearance; and, after the horse had been led into the road, some built up the fence again, others began to harness the horse, and two of the members, in obedience to Tom's orders, ran off to inform Johnny that every thing was ready for the start. By the time Harding and his friends arrived, the horse had been hitched to the wagon, and Tom sat on the seat, with a whip in one hand and the reins in the other.

"All aboard, fellows!" whispered the grand commander, and the Night-hawks, thirteen in number, tumbled into the wagon, which moved off on the road to 'Squire

Thompson's farm. Tom had conducted all his operations in a very cautious manner, and no one in the house had been alarmed.

"Newcombe," whispered Johnny, as Tom drove off, "if there was no danger of being overheard, we'd give you nine rousing cheers. You're a genuine brick."

The congratulations the chief received for the skill and bravery he had exhibited, were much more numerous than refined. The Night-hawks said and did every thing they could to convince him that they held his services in high appreciation; and Tom listened eagerly to all their compliments.

It was two miles to the farm; but Tom, being anxious to reach home again as soon as possible, put whip to the horse, which whirled his wagon load of mischievous Night-hawks rapidly over the road; and, at the end of half an hour, Tom drew up before the gate of 'Squire Thompson's farm and stopped. Johnny Harding sprang out of the wagon and opened the gate; after which Tom drove on, until he reached a barn, which was situated near the middle of the farm. Here he stopped again, and the Night-hawks, springing out of the wagon, started off in different directions to hunt up the vegetables—all except the grand commander, who, according to the agreement made before starting, was not required to assist in loading the cargo. There was now no danger of discovery. There was a house on the farm, but no one lived in it, and it was an easy matter to conduct their operations without making noise enough to alarm any of the neighbors.

The Night-hawks were not at all particular as to the nature of their "present," for whatever articles

came first to their hands—such as shovels, rakes, hoes, sticks of wood and chips—were seized and thrown into the wagon. But still there was room for a few vegetables, and presently a boy appeared with his arms filled with onions, followed by two or three loaded with green pumpkins, and Johnny Harding brought up the rear, bringing a goose, which he had captured after a long race.

"O, now, let him go!" exclaimed Tom. "Don't bring him here. He'll arouse every body within a mile around."

"No fear of that," replied Johnny, confidently. "I'll carry him in my arms, and every time he tries to make a noise I'll choke him."

This suggested a slight change in the original programme, for all the Night-hawks now turned their attention to the 'squire's live stock. Some climbed over the fence into the barn-yard, and endeavored to capture one of the calves, others attempted to run down the remainder of the geese, and the result was that, in a very few moments, all the dogs in the neighborhood had been aroused, and were barking vociferously.

"Our game is up now, boys," said Johnny. "Let's be off, or we'll have the Philistines down on us. I wish we could have caught two or three of those calves, and the rest of the geese. However, we have got as large a load already as this old horse can pull. All aboard, fellows! Drive on, Tom."

The retreat from the farm was easily accomplished, and as soon as the Night-hawks were satisfied that they were out of danger, they began to indulge in speculations as to what 'Squire Thompson would say when he

found what a present they had brought him; and Tom declared that he would like to be "hidden behind a tree somewhere, so that he might hear all the 'squire had to say about it." Had he known what was to happen before he got through with his night's work, it is probable that he never would have given utterance to this wish. But Tom was not as happy as he pretended to be. He was thinking of a most unpleasant task he had yet to perform, and that was to put the horse and wagon where he had found them. This was a particularly dangerous piece of work, and he would have been glad, indeed, could he have thought of some plan to shift the responsibility upon the shoulders of some body else.

"Boys," said he, after thinking the matter over, "I propose that we don't put the wagon back in the yard. Let's leave it outside the gate."

"O, no, Newcombe," replied Johnny, quickly, "that would spoil it all. In order to do the business up nicely, we must put every thing back where we found it."

"But just look at the risk I shall run," said Tom. "You must remember that the wagon is loaded, and that I can't pull it from the pasture to the barn. It's too heavy."

"Of course it is. You will have to drive right into the stable-yard."

"It's dangerous!" repeated Tom.

"I know it is," said Johnny; "but I know also that you are not afraid to do it."

"Of course he isn't," chimed in another. "I don't believe that Newcombe knows what fear is."

The long and short of the matter was, that, by the time the Night-hawks reached the fence that bounded

the lower end of 'Squire Thompson's pasture, Tom had been so skillfully handled by his companions, that he promised to put the wagon where he had found it, no matter if the 'squire and both his dogs were there to oppose him. But still he thought it best to be cautious, and, when they had arrived within a short distance of the house, Tom told Johnny to go round to the front of the lot and occupy the attention of the dogs as he had done before.

"All right, I'll do it," replied Johnny. "Here, Harry Green, hold my goose till I come back."

"Now, boys, I'm afraid of that goose," said Tom. "You had better let him go."

"O, no," replied Harry, "I'll watch him.

Tom was not satisfied with this arrangement, but he was obliged to submit to it; and Johnny, after cautioning the grand commander to be very careful, set off to find the dogs, accompanied by two or three of his friends. The dogs, being on the alert, soon became aware of the presence of the Night-hawks, and Johnny had no difficulty in inducing them to follow him to the lower end of the lot, where he stopped, and sent one of the boys back to inform Tom that the coast was clear. The grand commander reluctantly mounted to his seat in the wagon, and drove toward the barn. He drove very slowly, but the wagon, being heavily loaded, made a great deal of noise, and Tom was more than once on the point of going back to his companions, and informing them that, if they wished the wagon left in the barn-yard, they must send some one besides himself to put it there. But he knew just what would happen if he backed out, and, fearing ridicule more than the

wrath of the 'squire, he kept on, resolved to make the attempt, and, if he failed, to effect his escape as best he could. He was followed by several of the Night-hawks, one of whom opened the gate when he reached the stable, and Tom drove into the yard. At this moment the goose, which Harry Green held in his arms, and which he intended to tie with his handkerchief and put into the wagon as soon as the horse was unharnessed, escaped from its captor and flew over the fence into the yard, making noise enough to awaken the soundest sleeper in the 'squire's family.

"There," exclaimed Tom; "I told you just how it would be."

"Hurry up, Newcombe," whispered several of the boys. It's getting unhealthy about here."

Before Tom could jump down from the wagon, however, a low whistle from Johnny Harding told him that something was wrong in that quarter also. This was followed by a commotion in the house, the door opened, and 'Squire Thompson, with a lantern in one hand and a huge cane in the other, sprang down the steps, shouting:

"Here they are! Take 'em dogs, take 'em!"

All this happened in less time than it takes to write it, but the angry 'squire had scarcely made his appearance when the nimble Night-hawks, who had held themselves in readiness for this emergency, closed the gate and took to their heels, leaving the grand commander to fight his enemies, or to escape if he could. Tom saw, at a glance, that he had got himself into trouble, and that his chances for flight were very slim indeed. But he could not surrender without making an attempt to save himself; so he sprang down from the wagon and

started for the gate; but a loud, fierce bark, accompanied by an encouraging yell from the 'squire, told him that his pursuers were not far behind, and that his escape in that direction was cut off. Even if he succeeded in opening the gate before the dogs arrived, they would follow him down the road, and overtake him before he had gone twenty yards. Tom gave himself up for lost, and his only desire was to get out of reach of the dogs. He feared them more than the 'squire. There was a cherry-tree close at hand, and the grand commander sprang into its branches with the agility of a cat; but scarcely had he climbed out of reach, when the dogs arrived. To Tom's surprise and delight, they did not stop under the tree, but ran straight to the gate, where they stood, and kept up a furious barking, until the 'squire appeared on the scene.

"Catch 'em, dogs—catch the young scoundrels," he exclaimed, opening the gate.

The dogs bounded out into the road, and disappeared in the direction taken by the Night-hawks. But the latter had made good use of their time, and presently the dogs returned without having overtaken any of them. They were all safe except the grand commander, who sat in his tree and awaited the issue of events in a most unpleasant frame of mind. He had assured his friends that he would like to be in a position to "hear what the 'squire had to say about it;" and he seemed in a fair way to have his wish gratified.

"The young scoundrels!" exclaimed the 'squire, as he closed the gate. "Those boys ought all to be taken care of. I wonder what they were prowling about here for? Hallo, what 's this?"

TOM CAPTURED BY THE SQUIRE.—Page 205.

He had, for the first time, discovered that his horse and wagon had been used; and when he walked up and examined the contents of the wagon, his rage knew no bounds.

"I wish I had the rascals here," he exclaimed, in a voice that made Tom tremble; "I'd teach 'em. Here are hoes, rakes, onions, pumpkins, and—what's this? My two-horse plow, that I took out to the farm day before yesterday. The young rascals! What is it, Tiger? Look to him, old fellow."

While the 'squire had been examining the articles in the wagon, Tom was indulging in the hope that he might not be discovered. The dogs had not seen him climb into the tree, but they had sharp noses, and the 'squire's exclamation had been called forth by the actions of one of the dogs, which ran to the foot of the tree, and growled and barked furiously.

"What's up there, I say?" continued the 'squire, elevating his lantern, and peering up into the branches. "Ah, I've got you, you rascal! Come down from there! Who are you?"

"O, it's me; don't you know me, Mr. Thompson?" whined Tom, who saw that he was discovered, and that further concealment was useless.

"No, I don't know *me*," shouted the 'squire, in a most savage tone of voice; "come down from there!"

"Call your dogs off, then!" drawled Tom, "and I'll come down."

"Who are you?" demanded the 'squire again, for he did not recognize Tom, hidden as he was among the branches of the tree. "What's your name?"

"O, now, I'm Tom Newcombe! Don't you know

me, Mr. Thompson?" answered the grand commander in a most pitiful voice.

"Tom Newcombe!" repeated the 'squire, in astonishment. "Why, I am surprised at you, Tom; I always thought you were a good boy, and I never imagined that you would disgrace yourself by stealing a man's horse and wagon, and—come down from there, you young scoundrel."

The 'squire was very much astonished when he learned the name of his prisoner; for Tom, although he had often engaged with the Night-hawks in expeditions of this kind, had never before been detected in them; he had been so sly about it, that no one in the village ever thought he had a hand in their affairs. Those who were not very intimately acquainted with Tom, looked upon him as a lazy, do-nothing sort of boy, who could not muster up energy enough to engage in any mischief; and so the 'squire, little dreaming that he had captured the one to whose charge could be laid the most of the mischief done within three miles of the village, was inclined to regard Tom as an innocent boy, who had got himself into trouble by associating with some of the young rogues of the village. For this reason he was disposed to be very easy with him; but when he remembered that Tom had made one of the number of boys who had taken his horse and wagon without his permission, it made him angry again.

"I say, come down from there, you young villain!" repeated the 'squire, shaking his cane at the culprit, as if he intended to use it on him the moment he reached the ground "Do you hear me?"

"O, yes, I hear you!" drawled Tom; "but I sha'n't come down till you send those dogs off."

Seeing that Tom was resolved not to leave his perch so long as the dogs remained there, the 'squire called them into the barn and shut them up, after which he again ordered Tom to come down.

The grand commander obeyed this order very reluctantly, for he had not yet been able to decide what treatment he would receive from the 'squire. That gentleman had addressed him in the kindest possible language, and then, almost in the same breath, had called him a young scoundrel, and had shaken his cane at him, as if impatient to get an opportunity to lay it over his shoulders. He did not feel altogether safe; but now, that the dogs were gone, he could offer no excuse for remaining in the tree; so he slowly descended, and finally stood before the 'squire, who lifted his lantern and allowed its rays to fall full in his face.

"You look mean, Tommy," said he; "do n't you feel so?"

"O, yes, I do," drawled the grand commander.

The 'squire stood looking at his prisoner for a moment, as if undecided how to act, and finally continued:

"Go home, and remember to steer clear of bad company in future."

Tom did not wait for a second bidding, but quickly opened the gate, and started down the road with all the speed he could command.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MILITARY SCHOOL.

TOM was astonished as well as delighted that he had escaped so easily; for, understanding the 'squire's disposition as well as he did, he had expected to be severely dealt with. The 'squire had said that he "looked mean," and Tom had told him that he felt so; but one, to have seen him at that moment, would have had cause to doubt it, for he looked, and indeed felt, as if he had done a very smart thing. He had been a prisoner in the hands of the Philistines, and had escaped without a whipping, and, more than that, without divulging the names of any of his accomplices. But, after all, he had no cause to pride himself upon this point, for the 'squire had not asked him who his companions were. Had that gentleman taken the trouble to inquire into the matter, Tom, in order to screen himself, would have told him every thing he wanted to know.

When the grand commander reached the common, he suddenly found himself surrounded by his friends, who, after placing a safe distance between themselves and the 'squire's dogs, had waited for Tom to come up.

"What did he do to you?" asked Johnny, eagerly.

"O, nothing," replied Tom. "If some of you had

been in my place, you would not have escaped as easily as I did."

"Did he ask you who were with you?" inquired another.

"It would n't have made any difference if he had," answered the grand commander, indignantly. "Do you suppose that I would split on you? We are safe out of the scrape, and that 's the end of it."

But in this, Tom was very much mistaken; it was by no means the end of it, as he found the next day. In fact, he did not believe that the 'squire would allow the matter to drop there. He fully expected that his father would soon hear the full particulars of his night's work, and he was anxious to know what he would do about it. However, Tom kept all his fears to himself, and when he left the Night-hawks, he walked off whistling, as if he felt perfectly at his ease. He reached home in safety, succeeded in climbing up the porch into his room without disturbing any one in the house, and when he appeared at the breakfast table in the morning, he had the satisfaction of seeing that not one of the family knew any thing of his conduct over night.

When he had eaten his breakfast, he walked out on the lawn, and sat down to think over the question that had occupied his mind the day before, namely: What should he do next? But, contrary to his expectations, his evening with the Night-hawks had not quickened his ideas, for he was still unable to decide upon the business he ought to follow. He might, however, have spared himself the trouble of debating upon this question; for when he went down to the office, about ten o'clock, he found that his father had at last "taken the

matter into his own hands," as he had often threatened to do, and decided the matter for him.

"'Tom," said Mr. Newcombe, as the boy entered the office, "I was just on the point of starting in search of you. I want you to take a walk with me."

So saying, the merchant picked up his hat and cane, and left the office, followed by Tom, who was lost in wonder. He would have given every thing he possessed to know what was the matter; but, fearing that his father had heard of what had been going on at the 'squire's farm, he could not muster up courage enough to ask any questions. Mr. Newcombe walked through the village without making any remark, and finally stopped in front of the military school, a large building that stood on a hill, about a quarter of a mile from Newport, in the midst of extensive grounds, which were tastefully laid out, the whole being inclosed with a high picket fence, which pointed out the boundary of the students' little world.

"Why, father," exclaimed Tom, as Mr. Newcombe knocked at the gate, "I have n't told you that I wanted to come here!"

"I know you have n't," replied the merchant; "at least you have n't said so in words; but you have said, by your actions, that you can't be trusted, so I have concluded to put you where you will be closely watched."

This made it evident to Tom that his father knew all about what had happened the night before.

"I think this is just the place for you," continued Mr. Newcombe.

"O, I always was an unlucky boy," drawled Tom. "I never can do any thing like other fellows. I had al-

most made up my mind to go into the office as errand boy—"

"It's too late now!" replied his father. "Besides, I don't want a boy in my office that I can't trust."

During the two minutes that they stood at the gate waiting for some one to open it, Tom raised all sorts of objections to his father's arrangement, but could not induce him to change his mind. Mr. Newcombe never acted without mature deliberation, and when he had once decided upon his course, it was a hard matter to turn him from it. So Tom, in spite of himself, became a member of the military academy. He listened to the reading of the rules and regulations, reluctantly promised to obey them all, and, in the presence of his father, signed the muster-rolls; after which, Mr. Newcombe took leave of the principal, promising to return with Tom as soon as his uniform could be procured.

For two days after that Tom was a most miserable boy. He still entertained some hopes that he might be able to turn his father from his purpose, and, to accomplish his object, he invented all sorts of excuses and promises; but his efforts were unsuccessful. The merchant had decided that the military school was the best place for Tom, and the latter finally came to the conclusion that he would bear his punishment like a man.

One afternoon, for want of something better to do, Tom saddled his pony and took a short ride about the village. As he was returning home, he passed by the academy, and saw a company of boys engaged in drilling in the bayonet exercise. He dismounted, tied his pony to the fence, and watched the drill as long as it

continued; and, when he rode toward home, his opinion concerning the military school had changed materially. He was astonished at the ease and skill with which the young soldiers handled their muskets, and, more than all, he admired and envied the captain—a youth about his own age.

"Perhaps it isn't so bad, after all," he soliloquized. "I always thought that I'd like to go to that academy. If a fellow like that can get a commission, I'd like to know what's the reason I can't get one also. I don't intend to remain a private long. I shall work for shoulder-straps, and, the first thing some of those officers know, I'll make them take back seats. I'll certainly be captain of one of the companies in two or three weeks, and, after that, I shall have an easy time of it. Won't I feel gay, sporting my shoulder-straps about the village? Then, after I get through here, I'll go to West Point, and from there to the army; and then I'll soon be promoted to general. I am all right now. I have decided to be a soldier."

Tom was now as impatient to get into the military school as he had before been anxious to keep out of it; and, on the way home, he stopped at the tailor's where his uniforms were being made, and requested that the work might be completed as soon as possible, as he was losing valuable time. At the supper table, that night, he surprised his father by informing him that he also had decided that the "military school was the place for him;" that he had always thought that he was "cut out for a general;" and that if Mr. Newcombe would visit the camp the coming fall, he would see his son wearing a captain's uniform.

"You must remember that you have been disappointed a good many times," said the merchant.

"I know it," replied Tom; "but I am all right this time. I know I shall succeed. I'll be captain of one of the academy companies in less than three weeks."

"You'll have to work hard for it," said his father, "for you'll find some smart boys there."

"I don't care!" said Tom, confidently. "I'll beat them all. I'm bound to be the highest officer in the academy."

That week was a long one to Tom, but, to his immense relief, the arrangements were all completed at last, and one afternoon, about half-past three o'clock, the new student, dressed in his uniform, found himself standing in the presence of the principal. Mr. Newcombe had accompanied him to the academy, and, after urging him to make the best possible use of his time, and to strictly obey all the rules and regulations, he bade him good-by, and returned to his office, satisfied that he had left his son in safe hands for a few months, at least.

"Now, Newcombe," said the principal—a tall, dignified, military-looking man—"you are a member of the Newport Military Academy. I shall expect to hear a good account of you."

"I shall do my best, sir," replied Tom. "I want to be an officer, and I would like to know how to go to work to get a commission."

"There is but one way," replied the principal, with a smile, "and that is very simple. If you strictly obey the rules and regulations, you will be entitled to your shoulder-straps."

"How long before I can get them?" asked Tom.

"Not until the first of next quarter. That will give you two months in which to prepare for the examination. Remember, now, that you are expected to read the rules and regulations until you know just what to do, and how to do it. You will find several copies of them hung up in your dormitory, so that you can have them close at hand for reference."

The professor then faced to the right, with as much precision as if he had been standing in the ranks, with a musket on his shoulder; going to his desk, he opened a large book, which Tom thought looked like the ledger in his father's office; and, after turning over the leaves for a moment, rang a bell, which was presently answered by a servant belonging to the academy.

"Thomas Newcombe, dormitory H, number thirteen," said the principal. "Now, you may go with this man, and he will show you where you belong. I hope that I shall soon be able to assign you new quarters, for the students in that dormitory belong to the lowest class in school."

Tom's trunk, which contained his clothing, each article of which was marked with his name, stood in the hall, just outside the principal's door. This the man raised to his shoulder; and, after conducting Tom up a flight of stairs, ushered him into a large, airy room. This was dormitory H, which was destined to be the new student's quarters, not for a short time, as the principal fondly hoped, but during his entire stay at the academy. On both sides of the room, and at one end, were arranged the beds belonging to the students. At the left of the entrance, were two rooms, one of which

belonged to the assistant teacher, who had charge of the dormitory, and the other to the officers commanding that company. The dormitory was filled with students, all of whom appeared to be busily engaged with their books.

The man conducted Tom between the two rows of beds, until he arrived at the further end of the room, where he stopped and pointed to a number painted on a piece of tin, which was hung against the wall.

"There's number thirteen," said he. "This bed belongs to you."

As soon as the man had left the dormitory, some of the students, who had been closely watching Tom, gathered about him, as if they were impatient to make his acquaintance. The latter felt somewhat embarrassed when he found himself surrounded by so many strangers; but, wishing to make a favorable impression upon them, he tried hard to look unconcerned, and prepared to receive their advances as graciously as possible.

"How are you, my son?" began one of the boys.

"My son!" repeated Tom, in astonishment.

"Well, then, tell us what your name is? You are a greeny, are you not?"

"Now, see here," drawled Tom, "I want you to quit calling me greeny. I'll tell the teacher if you don't look out."

This speech showed another trait in Tom's character. He was a "tell-tale;" and when he became involved in trouble with any of his school-mates, he never undertook to defend himself, but hurried off to lay the matter before the teacher. It was evident that he intended to continue the practice at the academy.

"You 'll tell the teacher, will you!" exclaimed the boy who had first addressed him. "Then we have seen enough of you. Let him alone, fellows; he 's a Spooney and working for a commission."

At this moment, two boys entered the dormitory; and, seeing the crowd gathered about Tom's bed, they approached, and worked their way through the students, to obtain a view of the new comer; and the latter was delighted when he recognized Eugene Rich and Augustus Miller, two of his very intimate friends, and members of the society of Night-hawks. They expressed much joy at meeting Tom. After they had shaken hands with him, Rich turned to the boy who had called the new student a "greeny," exclaiming:

"See here, Dick Martin," you had better mind what you are about! Newcombe is an old friend of mine, and if you know when you are well off, you won't fool with him much."

"That 's a fact," said Miller. "Better apologize."

This put an entirely new aspect on the case. Tom had already seen that he had made a blunder when he threatened to "tell the teacher," and he was wondering how he could restore himself to favor. This could only be done by a proper exhibition of "spunk," which would show the students that, although he had threatened to appeal to the principal for protection, he still had the ability to defend himself, and that he was one who could not be tormented with impunity. Had he been left to himself, he would not have known how to act; but when he found that his two friends were ready to stand by him, he suddenly became very courageous.

"I certainly did n't mean to insult him," said Martin.

"When I inquired if he was a greeny, I only wanted to know if he had ever attended a military school before. I take it all back."

"Better look out," said Tom, shaking his head, threateningly. "I do n't stand much nonsense."

"I always knew you were a spunky chap, Tom," said Miller. "But Martin did n't mean any thing. He 's an old chum of mine; so shake hands and be friends."

Martin, accordingly extended his hand, which was accepted by Tom, who drew himself up to his full height, and thrust out his chest, to make himself appear as much like a soldier as possible, at the same time favoring his new friend with a glance which was intended to prove the truth of what he had said but a moment before—that he was a boy that "would n't stand much nonsense."

"That 's right," said Rich, who appeared to be a sort of leader among his companions. "Now, sit down here, Newcombe. You do n't know how often I have wished for you," he continued, as Tom seated himself on the bed. "It 's lonesome here, and we want some brave, strong fellow to propose some fun for us, and to help us out in it. (Here Tom straightened himself up again, and assumed what he considered to be a very reckless look, as if to assure the students standing about that he was the very fellow they wanted.) By the way, what are the Nighthawks doing now?"

Rich had been a member of the academy ever since the commencement of the session (five months), and during this time had never once been granted a furlough for a single hour. He was a lazy, good-for-nothing boy, more fond of mischief than of his books, and,

as a consequence, he was always behindhand in his lessons; and, from being the fifth in the highest class in school, he had been "promoted backward," until he found himself in the lowest class but one in the academy. He was too lazy to exert himself to regain his lost position; he was up before a court-martial nearly every month for some violation of the rules, and spent more than half his time in working out the punishments to which he was sentenced. His friend and right-hand man, Miller, was often in the same predicament; and this was the reason why they had never been allowed any privileges. Miller had been a shining light among the Night-hawks, holding the office of fourth colonel, while Rich was a second lieutenant, in good standing; and, having been confined so long, it was natural that they should wish to hear from the young rogues about the village.

Tom, being well posted in the movements of the Night-hawks, proceeded to give a glowing description of their recent exploit. The students listened eagerly; and Tom, finding himself surrounded by an appreciative audience, "spread" himself to the best of his ability. He was not mean enough to stoop to actual falsehood, but he so exaggerated the achievements of the Night-hawks, especially that portion of them in which he had been engaged, that it left the impression on the minds of his hearers that Tom had been the daring leader of a very daring lot of fellows. After he had finished his story, he expressed a desire to learn something about the life before him, the duties that would be required of him, the nature of his studies, and the extent of his privileges. Rich volunteered to give him the information, but, just

as he was about to begin, some one near the door called out, in a low tone:

"Attention, company!"

The effect of these words not a little surprised Tom, for the boys all hurriedly left him, and running to their beds, picked up their books, and in a moment all appeared to be deeply interested in their studies. Rich and Miller, who did not belong in that dormitory, and who were disobeying the rules by being in there during study hours, hastily retreated into the hall, and made the best of their way to their own quarters. As Tom sat on his bed, wondering at the strange behavior of the students, a step was heard in the hall, and presently one of the assistant teachers entered the dormitory. After looking about the room a moment, to satisfy himself that the boys were all at work, he called out—

"Newcombe!"

Tom, wondering what he was wanted for, arose from his seat and looked at the teacher without answering.

"Newcombe!" said the professor, in a louder tone.

"Well, here I am!" exclaimed Tom—a reply that caused a suppressed laughing among all the students in the room.

"Come here, Newcombe!" said the teacher; "and hereafter, when you are called," he continued, as Tom approached him, "you will answer 'Here, sir.' Come down into the school-room with me, and I will show you your lessons."

The principal of the academy had learned something of Tom's past history from his father, and had also been made acquainted with the fact that the boy had accomplished absolutely nothing in his studies. This had

been communicated to the assistant teacher, Mr Hudson, under whose charge Tom was placed, so that he had no difficulty in determining to which class he ought to assign the new student. His lessons for the morrow, in all the different branches, were duly pointed out to him; and Tom was again directed to carefully read the rules and regulations, so that he might know what hours of the day were devoted to study, and what to recreation.

"Now, Newcombe," said the teacher, "you will begin work to-morrow morning. Captain, Captain Preston!" he added, in a louder tone, calling to a boy who at that moment happened to pass through the hall, "step here a moment, if you please."

The young officer entered the room, and the teacher continued—

"Here's another raw recruit for you, captain. His name is Newcombe, and he belongs to dormitory H, number thirteen."

Captain Preston pulled a memorandum-book from his pocket, and, after writing down Tom's name and number, he turned to the new student and said:

"To-morrow afternoon, at three o'clock, I shall expect to see you in the armory."

This was all the captain thought it was then necessary to say; but it was enough to make Tom his enemy. The officer was at least two years younger than the new student, and the latter did not like the idea of being obliged to obey his orders. Tom also noticed that the teacher had addressed him in the most respectful language; that he had said, "Step this way, *if you please*," and that was another thing that made him

angry. It also had the effect of making him more determined than ever to get out of the ranks, if there was any possible way for him to do it.

As Tom started to return to his quarters, he heard the roll of a drum calling the students to dress parade —an exercise in which all the scholars who had learned the manual of arms were required to engage. The young soldiers came out of their rooms, and, after taking their muskets from the armory, each company was formed by its officers in front of the building, and marched to the parade ground. The principal stood on the porch watching these movements, and, when the battalion was marched away, he followed it, accompanied by Tom and a few more raw recruits, who were not expected to join in the review.

The students kept step admirably to the music of drum and fife; every order was executed promptly and without the least confusion; and Tom was delighted with all he saw. When they reached the parade ground, and the battalion had been drawn up in line, Tom was astonished to discover that a boy about his own age suddenly appeared and assumed the command. After seeing that the line was properly formed, he walked toward the principal, who stood a short distance in front of the students, then faced about, executing the movement with as much grace and precision as if he had been a soldier all his life, and ordered the battalion to "Present arms." When the command had been obeyed, he faced about again, and, after saluting the principal with his sword, advanced and took a position behind him. Tom closely watched all his movements, and was finally obliged to confess to himself

that he had a great deal to learn before he could become an officer.

"Who is that fellow?" he asked, turning to one of the raw recruits who stood beside him.

"That's Bill Steele, the adjutant," was the answer. "Isn't he gay? He handles that sword like an old cavalry man. He understands the broadsword exercise to a dot. He's our drill-master."

"Humph!" sneered the new student. "He isn't much."

The raw recruit had spoken in the highest terms of the adjutant, and that was something Tom could not endure, for it seemed to widen the gulf which he saw lay between him and the coveted commission. Although he had said that the officer "was n't much," Tom really thought he was a great deal. He admired his graceful movements and his soldierly bearing—two things which he knew that it was impossible for him to imitate. Being entirely unacquainted with the relative rank of the officers, he thought no more about his captain's shoulder-straps just then. He wanted to be the officer that had the most authority; consequently he envied the adjutant, and he made up his mind that, in a very short time, Bill Steele would be obliged to take a lower position, while he would assume the honors himself. But, as the parade progressed, Tom again began to doubt his ability to obtain any office, for he heard so many orders issued that it did not seem possible that he could ever learn them all.

"How long does it take a fellow to get the hang of this business?" he asked, turning to the raw recruit.

"Not long," was the answer. "I've been here only

three weeks, and I 'll go on dress parade next Monday. There are not many in the academy that can beat me handling a musket or a broadsword."

This, in some measure, reassured Tom, who again turned his attention to the parade. When it was concluded, the companies were marched back to the armory, and the work for the day was over until seven o'clock that evening. As soon as the students had taken care of their weapons, some of them started toward the gymnasium, some went back to the parade-ground to engage in a game of ball, a few studious ones resumed their books, while others prepared to idle away the time under the trees. Among the latter was Tom Newcombe, who had been joined by Martin, Rich, and Miller.

"Well, old fellow, what do you think of the academy?" asked the latter, as he threw himself on the grass beside Tom.

"It 's splendid," replied the new student.

"Yes," said Martin, with a laugh, "it is splendid, if you have nothing to do but stand by, with your hands in your pockets, and look on. You forget the two hours' daily drill, with muskets and broadswords."

"And our long, difficult lessons, with six hours' hard study," chimed in Rich.

"And the guard-house," said Miller, who had once spent two weeks in that pleasant abode, for attempting to desert the academy.

"The guard-house!" repeated Tom.

"Yes, sir; the prison," said Miller, "with nothing but bread-and-water diet."

"But I'm going to be an officer!" said the new student.

"Now, now, Newcombe; none of that!" exclaimed all the boys in a breath.

"Do n't be a Spooney," said Martin.

"O, now, look here," drawled Tom, "I want you to quit calling me Spooney."

"He did n't say you were a Spooney," interposed Rich; "he told you not to be one. You are too honorable to want to be an officer, when I tell you that the last one of them is a Spooney. The only way they get their positions is by toadying to the colonel—that 's the principal, you know. They are regular tell-tales; and if you do n't want to be punished, you must be careful what you say before them, for every word you utter will go straight to the colonel's ears. In fact, there are but a very few boys in the academy that a decent fellow can trust. I was an officer once—I was second lieutenant of Company A; and, as I have been behind the curtain, I know just how affairs are conducted. If I wanted a commission, I would loaf about the grounds until I heard some fellow complaining about something, and then I would go and tell the colonel of it. I could easily exchange my musket for a sword by doing that; but would n't you call it a mean trick?"

"Yes I would," replied Tom, emphatically. But the truth was, he thought if he could earn a shoulder-strap as easily as that, he would not hesitate to do it; and he treasured up this last remark of Rich's for future consideration.

"But I thought a fellow could n't be an officer unless he obeyed all the rules and regulations," said Tom, at length.

"O, that 's all in your eye," replied Martin. "The

colonel stuffs every new student, and he has been trying his hand on you; I can see that without specs. Now, there's Jim Williams, the captain of our company. I've known him to fail in his lessons day after day; and yet, at the end of the quarter, he has more extras than any other fellow in the class. I've seen him come on the parade-ground with dust on his boots, and his belt soiled; but I never knew him to lose any thing by it. If Rich, or Miller, or I, had been in his place, we would have had two hours' guard duty at night with bricks in our knapsacks. The amount of the matter is, that the colonel has his favorites, and they can do as they please; but the others must stand from under."

"Well, now, this beats me," drawled Tom, after he had thought the matter over. "I always was the unluckiest boy in the whole world. I never can do any thing like other fellows, for something is always happening to bother me."

"Why, what's the matter now?" asked Rich.

"O, I wanted to be an officer; but I can't."

"Of course you can't," was the answer. "As I said before, you are too honorable to be an officer, and the sooner you get that ridiculous idea out of your head, the better it will be for you. But, boys, let's take a walk about the grounds. I want to introduce Newcombe to the fellows in our set."

So saying, Rich arose from the ground and led the way toward the gymnasium, where some of the students were exercising their muscles, under the direction of one of the teachers.

CHAPTER XVII.

TOM WANTS TO BE COLONEL.

HAD Tom been allowed to have his own way, he would have packed his trunk and left the academy with the least possible delay. He was already very much disappointed in it, for he had found it widely different from what he imagined it to be. He had hoped that he should find the students far below him in their studies, (although he himself did not know how that could be possible,) so that he could, without the least trouble or exertion, take his shoulder-straps and assume the honors of an officer, without having any one to oppose him. But the parade he had just witnessed had discouraged him, and had also convinced him that if he expected to take a high position among those sharp, lively students, he must work hard for it. He was quite willing to believe what his friends had told him—that the officers owed their positions not to the number of merit marks they obtained, but to favoritism; and, after thinking the matter over, he was induced to make a slight change in his programme. He had assured his father that he would work hard for a commission, but that was entirely unnecessary now, for his great object must be to secure the good-will of the principal. Without that his efforts would be utterly

useless. But how should he accomplish this? The remark his friend Rich had made, clearly pointed out the way, and he determined to win the favor of the principal by playing the contemptible part of tale-bearer. In order to further his designs, he desired to make the acquaintance of the adjutant. He resolved to be with him as much as possible, to listen to every word that fell from his lips, and, if he could detect him in making any disrespectful remark about the teachers or the academy, he would carry it straight to the colonel. By this means, he was confident that he should be able to disgrace the adjutant; and the principal, to reward him for keeping so close a watch upon the interests of the academy, would certainly appoint him in his stead.

"That will be the way to do it," said Tom, delighted with the idea. "Push yourself up in the world, even if you have to pull somebody down in doing it. That's my motto."

A few moments serious consideration ought to have shown the new student that his plan never could succeed. Suppose the principal did break the adjutant! What chance was there for Tom to receive the appointment, when he did not even understand the manual of arms? But Tom did not stop to think of this. He wanted to be an officer, the highest in rank in the academy; and, having decided upon the course he ought to pursue in order to accomplish his object, he held to it with the tenacity of a bull-dog.

Tom walked with his companions toward the gymnasium, and, as they entered the building, the first object that attracted his attention was the adjutant, who, having performed some evolutions on the parallel bars,

stood leaning against a post with his arms folded, waiting to recover his breath after his violent exercise.

"Rich," whispered Tom, "give me an introduction to that officer!"

"What, that Spooney?" exclaimed Rich, in surprise. "If that's your game, Newcombe, we might as well break ranks first as last. If you are going to be friends with those fellows, we don't want any thing more to do with you. The set won't like it."

Under almost any other circumstances, Tom would have hesitated before incurring the displeasure of Rich and his companions; but if he accomplished the object he had in view, it would, he thought, more than make amends for the loss of their friendship. So he replied:

"I don't belong to the set yet, and I don't care whether they like it or not. I know what I am about."

"So do I," said Miller. "You're going back on us; that's what you are about. I didn't think that of you, Newcombe."

"Better keep away from every one that wears a shoulder-strap," said Martin; "you'll only get yourself into trouble if you do not."

Tom, seeing that they were not disposed to assist him in making the acquaintance of the adjutant, walked off, leaving his three friends vexed and disappointed. They disliked the idea of his becoming intimate with the young officer, for he was one whose influence and example had won more than one student from the "set;" and knowing that Tom could be easily led in any direction, besides being unacquainted with the object he had in view, they feared that they were about to lose him forever. It was too late too recall him, however, for

Tom walked straight up to the adjutant, who extended his hand, saying:

"Your name is Newcombe, is n't it? I thought so. I have heard of you," he continued, as he led the new student to a seat; "and a few moments ago the colonel ordered me to take charge of you. I am to drill you in the broadsword exercise. I know it is n't exactly my place to act the part of a drill-master, but I am comparatively a new student here; and, as I am working for something higher, I want to improve every opportunity to learn my duties."

"You are working for something higher!" repeated Tom, in surprise. "Why, I thought you were the highest officer in the academy."

"O, no!" replied the adjutant, with a laugh. "A captain ranks me. Look here!" he added, taking his coat down from a nail over his head, "I have only one bar in my shoulder-strap, you see, while a captain has two. I am only a first lieutenant."

Upon hearing this, Tom thought that he had no desire to become better acquainted with the adjutant. If he was nothing but a first lieutenant, he might keep his position, and welcome. He did not want it; he must have something higher. His next step must be to scrape an acquaintance with some captain, and try his designs upon him. As he arose to his feet, intending to act upon his resolve without delay, an idea struck him, and, turning to the adjutant, who was somewhat surprised at his strange behavior, he asked if the rank of captain was the highest in the academy.

"O, no, not by a long way!" was the answer. "First comes the colonel—that's the principal, you know If

he wore a uniform, he would have eagles in his shoulder straps. But, as he never wears any thing but citizen's clothes, he allows the lieutenant-colonel to sport the eagles. The lieutenant-colonel is the best scholar in school, and the highest in rank. I tell you, it takes merit-marks, and the hardest kind of study, to get that position. Every body is working for it, but George Smith holds the honors and the eagles in spite of us. Next comes the major. He's the second best scholar, and wears a silver leaf. Here comes the colonel now!" he continued, as a tall, pale-looking youth advanced toward them. "He's a fine fellow, and I know you'll like him."

When the colonel came up, the new student was introduced to him; and, when Tom saw the silver eagles he wore on his shoulders, he made up his mind that he had got hold of the right man at last. The young colonel appeared to be a very jovial fellow, and talked and laughed at such a rate that Tom soon began to feel perfectly at home in his company.

The hours from four until six in the afternoon were devoted to recreation, and all the students were then off duty. No respect was shown to rank during "play-time," but the boys all met on a footing of perfect equality. To the officers, especially, this was a season of relief; for, being free from military restraint, they were at liberty to throw off their assumed dignity, and mingle freely with their companions. Tom, however, had not been at the academy long enough to understand this, and he was astonished that one so high in authority as was the colonel, should condescend to laugh and joke with his inferiors. He thought that when he should

be entitled to wear the eagles, he would stand more on his dignity.

Tom could be a very pleasant companion if he chose, and, having now laid his plans against the colonel, he exerted himself to the utmost to work his way into his good graces. He resolved to carry out his ideas immediately, and commenced by requesting the officer to give him some instructions in his duties, hoping that he would accidentally let fall some word derogatory to the character of the academy or of the teachers. He watched him as closely as ever a cat watched a mouse, but all in vain. The colonel uttered no expression that could be used against him; but, on the contrary, he appeared to be perfectly contented, and satisfied with every thing in and about the academy. Finally, becoming weary of exercise in the gymnasium, the colonel put on his coat and strolled about the grounds with Tom, who, thinking that if any thing was said that would be of use to him, it would be necessary to have a witness to prove the fact, managed to keep the adjutant with him. The two officers, who, of course, never imagined what was passing in Tom's mind, good naturedly answered his questions, gave him all necessary instructions, and not a little good advice. While thus engaged, the ringing of a bell called them in to supper.

"Now go to your dormitory and march down into the dining-room with your company!" said the colonel. "Don't forget what we have told you. Study hard, obey all the rules and regulations, and go in strong for a commission. I would like to see you an officer."

"So would I," said Tom to himself, as he ran up the stairs toward his dormitory. "But I'll bet I don't

study very hard for it. I know an easier way to get it; and, if you do n't look out, Colonel Smith, I 'll have those silver eagles on my shoulders in less than a month."

When the students belonging to dormitory H had all assembled, they were formed in line by a sergeant, and marched two abreast down into the dining hall—a large room, in which there were spread a sufficient number of tables to accommodate all the boys at once. When Tom had been shown to the seat he was to occupy, he looked about him, and discovered that his mess-table was but a short distance from the one occupied by the officers. The lieutenant-colonel sat at the head of the table, the major on his right hand, the ranking captain on his left, and so on down to the foot. Tom thought that matters could not have been arranged to suit him better, for, after listening a moment, he found that, in spite of the clatter of knives and forks, and the conversation going on all around him, he could distinctly hear every word uttered by the lieutenant-colonel. The latter, little dreaming how closely he was watched, talked and laughed with the officers, but, to Tom's disappointment and disgust, said not a single word against either the teachers or the academy. This was very discouraging, for Tom, having decided to be a colonel, wished to assume the honors as soon as possible.

At length there was a lull in the conversation, and the major, who had been closely examining his glass of milk, set it down before the colonel, saying:

"Smith, do n't you believe there 's water in that milk? Just see how blue it looks."

The colonel took the glass, and holding it up to the light, slowly turned it about, and finally, set it down on the table again, Tom all the while closely watching his motions, and impatiently waiting for his reply It came at length, and the new student almost jumped from his chair with delight.

"I know there is water in it," said the colonel. "That milk-man is swindling us. Let 's catch him some day, and duck him in the harbor."

"That would be unofficer-like conduct," said the major, "and a court-martial would be the result."

"O, hang your courts-martial," said the colonel, who had engaged in so many that he was really tired of them. "I wish such a thing was n't known in this academy."

Here the subject of the conversation was changed; but Tom, who had listened almost breathlessly to every word of it, had, he conceived, heard enough to warrant him in making an effort to dislodge the colonel from his high position. The officer had said that there was water in the milk, had proposed to duck the milk-man, and had exclaimed, "Hang your courts-martial!" and, if that was not speaking ill of the academy, Tom thought he would like to know what was. Improbable as it may seem, he was highly elated, and he fully expected that he would soon be occupying the chair at the head of the officers' table. If he was foolish, he was but a type of a large class of boys—and men, too—who, upon equally insignificant grounds, have reared just such great expectations.

Tom was hungry when he sat down to the table, but that had all passed away now, for he had something

better to occupy his mind. He resolved to seek the principal immediately, and lay the matter before him. So, pushing his chair back from the table, he was about to walk out of the room, when a sergeant, belonging to his company, exclaimed:

"Newcombe, where are you going? Sit down!"

"I have business with the principal," answered Tom, "and I am in a great hurry to see him."

"Well, it is not customary for students to go out in that unceremonious manner," said the sergeant. "We'll all go before long; but, if you want to go now, you'll have to ask the lieutenant-colonel's permission."

"I won't do that!" said Tom to himself, as he reluctantly returned to his seat at the table. "If I don't request favors of him now, he can't ask them of me when I become colonel. I'll fix you," he muttered, looking toward the sergeant, who, he thought, had addressed him rather too abruptly. "I'll take those stripes off your arm the very first thing I do. You are not fit to be an officer."

Tom was very indignant at being obliged to remain in his seat until all the students had finished their suppers. It was a regulation he did not like, neither could he see that it was of any use. As soon as the colonel's straps were on his shoulders, he would ask the principal to abolish the rule. This, he thought, would serve to render him very popular with the students, several of whom, he noticed, having satisfied their appetites, were impatient at being required to wait for their companions. They were not compelled to wait long, however, for presently the order was given for the students to return to their quarters. Tom's company was the last that

marched out; and, as soon as they reached the dormitory, and the command had been given to break ranks, Tom started below, to see the principal.

"Newcombe!" shouted the sergeant, from the head of the stairs, "where are you going?"

"I told you once before to-night that I wanted to see the principal," said Tom, impatient at being delayed.

"It is time to begin study, now," said the sergeant. "Is your business important?"

"Yes!" answered the new student; "it is very important."

"Go ahead, then; but return as soon as you can, for I am responsible for you now until you make your appearance in the school-room."

"I'll break that fellow the minute I am colonel," said Tom, as he hurried along the hall. "He sha'n't be an officer any longer."

Arriving at the principal's apartment, he pounded loudly upon the door; and, after a few moments' delay, a voice from the inside bade him enter. The new student opened the door, and found himself in the presence of the principal, who greeted him with:

"Newcombe, this is a very unusual hour for a student to visit me. You ought to be at work at your lessons."

"I know it, sir," replied Tom; "but I have something very important to say to you."

The principal did not exhibit the curiosity that the new student had imagined he would, for he answered:

"I will listen to you this time, but hereafter, when you wish to see me on business, you must do so when I visit your dormitory in the morning. But what were you going to say?"

Tom's expectations were considerable dampened by the stern, dignified demeanor of the principal, and, for a moment, he wished that he had never envied the colonel, for he began to fear that, perhaps, his success was rather doubtful after all. But it was too late to retreat; and, summing up all his courage, Tom replied:

"I have been informed, sir—the fact is, the lieutenant-colonel says your milk-man puts water in the milk."

The principal was evidently very much astonished at this revelation, for he settled back in his chair, and looked at the new student without speaking.

"Yes, sir; he said it!" continued Tom, who fancied that he saw something encouraging in the principal's look. "I heard him, and I can bring plenty of witnesses to prove it. He also proposed to catch the milk-man and duck him in the harbor; and when one of the boys told him that he would be court-martialed if he did, he said, 'Hang your courts-martial.' I don't like to hear any body run down the school; and if you will give me those eagles, I'll make the boys stop talking that way."

Tom had reached the point at last. In so many words, he had requested that the lieutenant-colonel might be broken, and the eagles given to him. He imagined that he had done the principal a great kindness in thus exposing an unworthy officer, and he hoped that the zeal he had manifested in watching over the interests of the academy, would insure him the coveted eagles. He fully expected that such would be the result, for he did not see how it could be otherwise. If the colonel wished to reward honest, well-meaning pupils, that was the time to show it.

"Newcombe!" said the principal, sternly, "you have made a very bad beginning. You have been in the academy scarcely three hours, and yet you begin to carry tales. If you hoped to gain any thing by it, you will be sadly disappointed. I will see you again to-morrow morning. That will do, sir."

Tom was utterly confounded. He had staked all his hopes on the result of this interview with the colonel, and he had, indeed, been most sadly disappointed. Choking back a great lump that seemed to be rising in his throat, he picked up his cap, walked slowly out of the principal's room, and ascended to his quarters.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TOM HAS AN IDEA.

TOM had made a desperate effort to raise himself from the ranks to the position of an officer, but he had signally failed. He did not feel angry, but he was astonished to discover that his magnificent plan, which, at the beginning, had held out such bright promises of success, had so completely miscarried. He could not understand it. He repeatedly assured himself that he had used his best endeavors to uphold the honor and dignity of the academy; but, as was invariably the case with him, he had been unsuccessful; and it was all owing to the fact that his efforts had not been appreciated. In fact, nobody ever appreciated any thing he tried to accomplish. Do what he would, some one was always ready to scold and find fault with him; and, with Tom's amazement, there was mingled not a little disappointment. The eagles, which he so confidently expected would soon adorn his own shoulders, was still the property of one, who, in his estimation, was most unworthy of them, and, at present, he could discover no means of securing their possession. This, he imagined, afforded him abundant proof that what Rich had told him was true—that the officers held their positions through favoritism. The lieutenant-

colonel was undoubtedly the principal's favorite; and all attempts to wrest the eagles from him, especially while he could rely upon the assistance of so powerful a friend as the professor, would be useless. This discouraged Tom, who now began to realize the fact that his chances for obtaining a shoulder-strap were very slim indeed.

As these thoughts passed through the new student's mind, he entered his dormitory, where he was again confronted by the sergeant, who informed him that he was wanted down stairs. Scarcely comprehending what was said to him, Tom retraced his steps to the hall, and finally found his way into the school-room, where all the students were congregated, engaged in studying their lessons for the morrow. Tom took the seat pointed out to him, and listlessly picking up his arithmetic, he fastened his eyes on the page, (although, in his bewilderment, he did not notice that he held the book upside down,) and again pondered upon what had transpired during his interview with the principal.

"Now, what shall I do?" he soliloquized. "I have tried, many a time during my life, to do a teacher a kindness, but I'll never do it again as long as I live. The academy may go to ruin for all I care. This is n't the first time I have been called a tale-bearer for trying to follow the 'golden rule'—doing as I would be done by. If any one should speak ill of me, in the presence of a friend, would n't I want that friend to come and tell me of it? Of course I would, and I would reward him for it if I could. But the principal do n't look at it in that light. He has his favorites, and he is determined that he won't hear any thing said against them. He has

no honor about him. He 's the meanest man I ever saw and I 'll never try to help him again. And I've got to stay here almost five months! O, I can't be a soldier!"

During the entire hour and a half that the students were required to remain at their books, Tom's mind was so fully occupied with such thoughts as these, that, when he returned to his dormitory, he knew no more about his lessons than he did when he first entered the school-room. But he was not at all concerned about that, for a more important matter was demanding his attention, and that was the interview that the principal had promised him in the morning. What would the colonel do with him? Tom almost gasped as he asked himself this question, for he thought of the guard-house, with "bread-and-water diet," and the "two hours extra duty at night, with bricks in his knapsack." But there was no escaping his punishment, whatever it might be, and Tom, at last, resolved to "stand and take it like a man." When he awoke in the morning, he repeated this determination, which was accompanied by a wish that the colonel would "be in a hurry about it, and not keep him waiting." He was not kept long in suspense, however, for just as he finished his breakfast, an orderly informed him that the principal desired his presence in the school-room.

"Aha, Newcombe!" whispered Rich, who at that moment happened to pass through the hall, and who saw, by Tom's looks, that something was wrong, "you are going to be hauled over the coals, are you? I knew just how it would be when I saw you talking with those Spooneys last night. I guess you 'll pay more attention to a friend's advice in the future."

Tom tried hard to muster up courage enough to en-

aided him to pass through the interview in an easy, unconcerned manner, but the attempt was a complete failure; for, when he found himself in the presence of the principal, he trembled and turned pale in spite of himself. To his surprise, however, he was not sentenced to the guard-house, neither was he obliged to perform extra duty, but he listened to a lecture on tale-bearing that made him ashamed of himself. It was a difficult matter, however, to convince Tom that he was in the wrong; and when he left the school-room, he repeated the conclusion at which he had arrived the night before, that the principal was "the meanest man he ever saw." He congratulated himself on escaping so easily, but it was not long before he almost wished that he had been shut up in the guard-house, so that he might have avoided what followed. First came half an hour's drill, with muskets, which disgusted Tom, and made him wonder why he had ever been so foolish as to think of becoming a soldier. Then came an hour's hard study, and, after that, his arithmetic lesson, in which, as was to be expected, he failed completely. This was followed by exercise with the broadswords, during which Tom whispered to the boy who stood next to him, that "Bill Steele threw on a heap of style for one who was nothing but a first lieutenant." This brought him a caution from the adjutant, who desired Tom to pay more attention to what was going on, and postpone his talking until after drill hours. Taking all things into consideration, Tom thought that he had never before passed such a long and disagreeable day. The discipline was very strict; and, on more than one occasion, Tom was sent to his dormitory to read the rules and

regulations, in order that he might know that he had violated some of them. The lessons were long and difficult, the drills tedious and uninteresting; and long before play-time arrived he had repeatedly assured some of his class-mates that he had "seen enough of the military school." When dress-parade was over, Tom, in no amiable frame of mind, took his seat under one of the trees, where he was soon joined by his three friends.

"Well, Newcombe!" said Rich, "what did the old colonel say to you? Did he give you a blowing up?"

"O, yes he did!" replied the new student. Then, fearing that his companions might inquire into the matter, he added: "Boys, you had better look out! There's an awful story-teller in the school!"

"Now, that's just what we told you!" said Miller, who, of course, little imagined that Tom himself was the tale-bearer. "We warned you to keep away from every one wearing a shoulder-strap, but you wouldn't pay any attention to us. You always were a bull-headed rascal, and I don't pity you in the least."

"But we haven't got any thing against you!" chimed in Rich. "If you will fall in with us, we'll keep you out of all such difficulties. You see we have been here long enough to know all the ropes, and you won't lose any thing by taking our advice."

"I am the unluckiest boy in the whole world," said Tom. "I'm always getting into trouble. I may as well stick to you now, because I never can be an officer."

"Of course you can't. We told you that before. But, Newcombe, we've got something to propose to you. Martin, just excuse us a moment."

So saying, Rich and Miller took Tom by the arm,

and, after leading him to an unfrequented part of the ground, the latter continued:

"Newcombe, we have been thinking of admitting some new members to our society. There are eleven good fellows here, and we should like to see them brought in. Our constitution provides that any two officers, higher than the rank of captain, may admit as many as they please. You, being grand commander, and I a fourth colonel, the job can be easily done. I know there is not much prospect now that it will ever be of any use to them, but there is no knowing what may happen."

"Bring them in!" said Tom, who was ready to join in any thing that would occupy his mind, and drive out the remembrance of his day's experience. "Go and get them Rich—one at a time."

The latter at once started off to hunt up the boys belonging to the "set," and presently Martin approached the place where Tom and Miller were standing, and made known his desire to be admitted as a member of the society.

"Take off your cap," said Tom, who, by virtue of his high rank, conducted the proceedings. "Now, Richard Martin, do you solemnly promise that, if you are admitted to this society, you will obey its rules and regulations?"

"I do!" answered Martin.

"Well, then," continued the grand commander "listen to the constitution by which you will be governed."

So saying, Tom, after having removed his own cap, and cast his eye about the grounds to see that no one

was within hearing, drew a paper from his pocket, and read, in a whisper, as follows:

WE, the boys of the village of Newport, in order to form a more perfect union, protect ourselves from all outsiders, promote harmony and good feeling, provide for our defense against those who have proved themselves unworthy of our friendship, do ordain and establish this constitution for the Night-hawks.

ARTICLE I. Believing, as we firmly do, that all monarchies and aristocracies are bound to be overthrown, the government of this society shall be democratic. The majority shall always rule.

ARTICLE II. No boy shall be admitted as a member of this society, who has once proved unfaithful to his promise, or who shall not bind himself to obey all its rules and regulations, strive to promote peace and harmony among the members, and carefully guard all its secrets from outsiders.

ARTICLE III. In order to fully carry out the objects of this society, every member, upon admittance, shall receive the appointment of corporal. All Night-hawks shall be officers in the line of promotion, and daring exploits shall not be passed unnoticed.

ARTICLE IV. New members may be admitted by any two officers of higher rank than captain, upon recommendation of at least two members in good standing.

ARTICLE V. When any member is known to be in trouble, it shall be the duty of all to hasten to his relief. As prosperity makes friends, and adversity tries them, all good Night-hawks will stick to each other through thick and thin. No member, who refuses to

render prompt assistance to a companion in adversity shall be considered a good Night-hawk.

ARTICLE VI. This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of all the members of the society.

"There!" said Tom, when he had finished reading the document, "do you again promise to faithfully obey this constitution?"

"Yes," replied Martin, "I'll stick to what I said in the first place. But I do n't see what good such a society will do us here."

"There's no knowing what may turn up," said Tom. "You may see the use of it before you are many weeks older. Now I will give you a certificate. As you are a stranger here, you won't know the village boys when you meet them; so, besides the signs and pass-words which we shall teach you presently, it will be necessary for you to have something to show."

As Tom spoke, he drew his memorandum-book from his pocket, and, tearing out a leaf, handed it to Miller, who drew up the following certificate of membership:

"This certifies that Corporal Richard Martin has, this day (Tuesday, August 14th) been admitted as a member of our society, and that he is entitled to all the rights and privileges of a Night-hawk. Members are instructed to treat him with the usual respect."

When Tom and Miller had affixed their signatures to the document, the former handed it to Martin, saying: "Now, then, whenever you come across a Night-hawk, give him that paper, and he 'll use you like a gentleman. Bring on the next."

One by one the boys belonging to the "set" came forward, and were admitted with all due solemnity. In half an hour they had all been initiated; and, after drawing them up in a line, Tom began to teach them the signs and pass-words. Some of the boys were pleased with the society, while others, like Martin, declared that they "could n't see the use of it." However, they all promised to obey the rules and regulations; and, when the business had been transacted, the Night-hawks were dismissed.

For three weeks Tom led a most unhappy life at the academy. His lessons were long and difficult; but he really tried to master them, and to obey all the rules, for he feared the punishment that would be inflicted upon him in case of failure. He had so long given way to his careless habits, however, that it was almost an impossibility for him to conform to all the regulations. Just at the moment when he conceived that he was making rapid progress, he would suddenly find himself in some difficulty. One afternoon, after he had learned the manual of arms, and was ordered to attend dress parade, he could not find his musket. He was certain that he had put it carefully in its proper place; and, when brought up before the principal, he informed that gentleman that it had been taken by some of the students, who wished to play a joke upon him. But, when the matter was investigated, it was found that the missing musket had been picked up in the yard by one of the teachers. Then Tom remembered that, while engaged in cleaning the weapon, he had been summoned to his class, and that he had thrown the musket down, intending to return for it as soon as he had recited his

lesson. But he had forgotten all about it, and the musket was put into what the boys called the "lucky bag." Of course there was more than one careless student in the academy; and, to teach them to pay more attention to their duties, any articles that were found lying about the building or grounds, were taken care of by the teachers, and the owner was obliged to undergo some slight punishment as a penalty. Such articles as knives, foot-balls, and bats were often mislaid, but no one had ever before heard of a musket being lost, and the colonel thought the offense called for some extra punishment. So that night Tom was put on guard duty, and was obliged to walk his beat for two hours, with his musket on his shoulder, and a heavy knapsack on his back. This was the first time he had been punished while at the academy, and his rage knew no bounds. When he came off guard he went to bed, resolved that he would stay in the school no longer. If his offense had been a serious one, he would not have cared any thing about it; but compelling a boy to stand two hours' extra guard duty just because he lost his musket, was carrying matters altogether too far. He would n't stand it.

But there was another thing that was a source of great trouble to Tom just then, and that was the examination that was fast approaching, and of which he had that day received a vivid and glowing description from his two friends, Rich and Miller. These reviews were held twice each year, and, when they were ended, the students went into camp—or, rather, that part of them who passed the required examination. The others remained at the academy "under arrest." While the successful scholars were enjoying themselves, they were de-

prived of all liberty, and required to continue the regular routine of study and drill.

To have their names placed on the list with those who were to be permitted to go into camp, was the highest ambition of all the scholars in the academy. They worked harder for it than they did for shoulder-straps. The camping-grounds were situated about nine miles from the village, in a beautiful valley, through which ran a clear, dancing trout brook. In going to and from these grounds the students were commanded by their own officers, had their baggage-train, which contained their knapsacks, provisions, and camp equipage, and conducted themselves in all respects like an army on a march. Skirmishers were occasionally thrown out, as if "feeling" an enemy's position; invisible foes were charged and routed, and imaginary breastworks were carried at the point of the bayonet. While in camp all study was suspended, and no work, except guard duty, was required of the students. Those off duty were allowed furloughs, and trout fishing was the order of the day. In short, even the laziest students acknowledged that two weeks' liberty among the hills more than made amends for three months hard study. All this, we repeat, had been described to Tom, and it was no wonder that he looked forward to the examination with rather an anxious eye. He had assured his father that he would appear at the next camp wearing an officer's uniform; but he had given up all hopes of being able to fulfill his promise. Instead of resolving to go earnestly to work to win the coveted shoulder-straps, and, acting upon his resolution, he began to look about to discover some way by which he might be able to avoid

the examination, which he knew would result in his being obliged to remain at the academy.

For the next two days, Tom was in a fever of excitement. He took no interest whatever in his duties, but spent all his time in thinking and planning. One day, during play-hours, he paid a visit to Miller and Rich; and while in their dormitory, he picked up an old newspaper that happened to be lying on the latter's bed, and, while glancing listlessly over its columns, his eye fell upon a paragraph that instantly arrested his attention.

"Aha!" he exclaimed, after reading it over and over several times, in order to fully comprehend its meaning. "I say, Rich, do you care if I tear a piece out of this paper?"

"No!" replied the latter, looking up in surprise. "But what's in the wind now?"

"O, nothing!" answered Tom, hastily tearing out the article that had interested him, and placing it in his pocket-book for safe keeping. "Here's something I want to save for future reference. I've got an idea!"

"What is it, Newcombe?" asked Miller, eagerly. "Let us see that paper!"

"O no, I can't! I just say that I've got a splendid idea, and as soon as I follow it out, I'll tell you what it is. It will astonish you!"

"Will it? Then tell us what it is now!" said Rich, impatiently. "Perhaps we can help you."

"I don't need any of your help. I can get along very well by myself."

So saying, Tom turned on his heel and walked out of the dormitory, leaving his two friends at a loss how to account for his strange behavior.

Tom was now in his element. He had a "splendid idea" that he wanted to "follow out." He was generally very expert at such business, but, in the present instance, he could not help acknowledging to himself that his success was doubtful. He walked about among his companions with his eyes fastened thoughtfully on the ground; and, although he would occasionally chuckle to himself when he thought over his grand idea, his face more frequently wore a disappointed look, as if he found innumerable obstacles in his way. It was a more difficult task than he had ever undertaken before, and it was two days before he had thought the matter over and arrived at a conclusion. His was an enterprise that demanded an unusual amount of attention, for it was one that no other boy in the academy would have thought seriously of attempting. But Tom, who had at last been led to realize the fact that he could never be an officer, and being determined not to remain at the academy under arrest while the students were enjoying themselves, had resolved to do something desperate. In spite of the entreaties of his friends, which were renewed at every opportunity, Tom kept his own counsel, and, it was not until he had decided upon his course, that he intimated to Rich, Miller, and Martin, that he was ready to reveal his secret. So, one night, when dress parade was over, Tom conducted his companions to a remote corner of the grounds, where he gave them an insight into the "splendid idea" which had so long occupied all his thoughts.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

"NOW, then, Newcombe," said Miller, as he seated himself on the grass, under one of the trees, "let us hear what you have to say."

"Before I begin," said Tom, "I want you to promise, that if you do n't see fit to join my enterprise, you won't split on me."

"Split on you!" echoed Miller. "Do n't we know, as well as you do, that it is against the laws of our society to divulge secrets? There are no tell-tales among us."

Tom turned away his head as his companion said this, for he knew, if no one else did, that there was one tale-bearer, at least, in the society. What would Rich, and Miller, and all the other faithful Night-hawks have thought, had they known that the one who held the highest office in the gift of the organization, had been trying to better his condition by carrying tales to the principal?

"No, sir; I do n't think there is a single fellow among us who would be mean enough to split on you," continued Miller. "If there is, I know I am not the one, for I have shown, more than once, that I can be trusted."

"Speak it out, Newcombe," said Rich. "We have

all made solemn promises to stand by each other through thick and thin, and we are all true blue."

"Well, to begin with," said Tom; "I know very well that I can't pass a decent examination, and I don't want to be confined in the academy building, while all the other fellows are having a jolly time in camp."

"Neither do I," said Rich. "But we can't help ourselves."

"Perhaps we can," said Tom, shaking his head knowingly; "perhaps we can. If I have n't succeeded in my arithmetic and geography lessons, I've got something better worked out. You have been to sea on three or four voyages, have n't you, Rich?"

"Yes," answered that worthy, "and I am a good sailor—better than any other boy in the academy."

"But could you take command of a vessel—say of the size of the Swallow?"

"Command a sloop like that! Yes, of course I could. If I knew that she was sea-worthy, I would n't be afraid to take her to Europe."

"That's all right!" said Tom, evidently very much relieved. "That's one difficulty out of the way. I knew I would be certain to succeed."

"But, Newcombe, what's all this got to do with your grand idea?" asked Miller, impatiently. "Why do n't you tell us what you intend to do?"

"Well, I am going to tell you now," replied Tom. "I propose that we escape the examination, by taking the Swallow and going to sea in her."

The boys were all very much astonished at this proposition; but, without allowing them time to raise any objections, Tom pulled out his pocket-book, and, produc-

ing the piece of newspaper which had so excited the curiosity of his companions, he handed it to Miller, saying, "Read that."

The latter took the paper, looked at it a moment, and then, springing to his feet, seized Tom's hand, shouting:

"Newcombe, you 're a brick! Your idea is a glorious one! I see it all, now!"

"Read it! Read it!" exclaimed Rich and Martin. "Let us hear it."

Thus appealed to, Miller again seated himself, and read aloud as follows:

"PLUCKY SAILOR BOYS.—Two lads, each about fourteen years of age, living in Marblehead, Mass., undertook a daring exploit about three weeks ago. They, by some means or other, got possession of a small yacht in the harbor, and after laying in a good supply of provisions, which took them three days, they set sail and put out to sea. They were picked up, five miles outside, by a revenue cutter, and, after being taken on board, stated that they had laid their plans to go to Europe. They were taken back to the city and restored to their parents."

"There! what do you think of that?" asked Tom, when Miller had finished reading the article.

"It 's gay," said Rich. "They were plucky chaps indeed."

"Why do n't you say something?" inquired Miller, turning to Martin, who sat gazing thoughtfully at the ground. "Do n't you see through the thing yet?"

"Yes," replied the latter; "what you intend to do is as plain as daylight. But I don't think the idea is so very gay, after all."

"Why not?" asked Tom.

"Because those 'plucky sailor boys' did not get very far on their way toward Europe before they were overtaken and carried back. Their scheme failed."

"That's because they didn't know any thing," said Rich, promptly. "They ought to have looked out for that."

"And there's one thing the paper forgot to speak about," continued Martin. "It doesn't say whether or not those two fellows were punished when they got home. If we should be caught in a scrape like that, we never would be released from the lock-up, or get through standing guard, and performing the extra duties that would be imposed upon us."

"Now, don't squeal before you are hurt," said Miller. "If I had known that you were so chicken-hearted, I never would have proposed you as a member of our society."

"I am no coward!" replied Martin, angrily; "but I have common sense enough to know that we had better look before we leap. Before we attempt to carry out Tom's idea, we must see exactly how the land lays. In the first place, we have no boat, and, in the next place, it would be of no use to us if we had; for we are not the ones who get furloughs whenever we ask for them."

"O, Newcombe has got that all worked out," said Miller, who was impatient to hear the details of the plan. "Give us all the particulars, Tom."

"I can do that in a very few words," said the latter.

"We will get together all the members of our society who are willing to go with us, escape from the academy some night, take the Swallow, or some other little trading vessel, and go on a cruise. We'll stay out until the examination is over, and then come back."

"That's it!" exclaimed Miller. "I'm in for it. But suppose we should be captured and brought back?"

"We don't intend to come back to the academy until we get ready!" said Rich. "We'll look out for that. But, boys, don't begin to raise objections now. We must get rid of that examination, if possible, and Tom is just the chap to show us how to do it."

"Go on, Newcombe—what next?"

"I have but one thing more to say," continued Tom, "and that is, I will engineer this thing through if you want me to. You know that I can call upon any member of the society for assistance."

"But how will we get the boat?" asked Rich.

"That's my business. There are fourteen fellows in the academy whom we can trust, and I want to know how many of them are willing to go with us; and then I must have authority to do as I please, or I won't budge an inch. I'll go on my own hook. I have a boat of my own, and I am bound to get away from here before that examination comes off. What would my father say if he should happen to visit the camp, and the colonel should tell him that I was at the academy, 'under arrest?'"

"Well, Tom," said Martin, after thinking a moment, "I, for one, am perfectly willing that you should boss this job, but you know the government of our society is democratic, and we all have a hand in whatever is

going on. I shall do just as the majority say. If they think the scheme can be successfully carried out, I am in for it; and, in order to get the most of the boys on your side, you ought to tell us exactly what you are going to do, and how you intend to do it."

Tom could not very well resist the force of this reasoning. The scheme he had proposed was rather different from any thing the Night-hawks had ever before thought of; and, knowing that if it proved successful it would throw all their former exploits into the shade, Tom wanted the honor of carrying it through alone and unaided. He had not the least idea of going off by himself in the Mystery, but he thought that, by threatening to leave his companions to themselves, he might frighten them into allowing him to have his own way. But it was plain that the boys were not in favor of "buying a cat in a bag;" they did not intend to give their consent to Tom's scheme until they understood all about it.

"Now, Newcombe," said Rich, "tell us how we are to get the Swallow. We want to know all the particulars."

"We must have help," replied Tom. "It was my intention to write to some of the boys in the village."

"Then it's lucky that we didn't give you authority to do as you pleased, for you would have knocked the whole thing into a cocked hat in no time," said Miller, decidedly. "Suppose the letter should fall into the hands of the Philistines? That would be the end of your cruise, and you would find a boy about your size in the guard-house, living on bread and water. I've got an idea," he continued. "I propose that we all

study hard, and behave ourselves this week, and, perhaps, some of us can manage to get a furlough next Saturday. If one fails, another may succeed, you know, and we'll give the lucky ones authority to call on the boys in the village and talk the matter over with them. And now about the Swallow! Do you propose to hire her?"

"Of course not!" replied Tom. "We'll take her and welcome."

"Steal her!" ejaculated Rich. "That plan won't work, either. If we should do that, old 'Squire Thompson would have his hands on us the moment we got back. I propose that we charter her. We've all got some money."

"Let us speak to the other fellows, and see what they have to say on the subject," said Martin, who, for some time, had remained silent.

"That's a sensible idea!" exclaimed Tom, who was obliged to confess to himself that he had made two great mistakes in his calculations. "But go about it easy. Be careful that no one overhears you. Tell them to meet us here in a quarter of an hour."

The others agreeing to this proposal, the four conspirators returned to the building to hunt up all the members of their society. The Night-hawks were scattered about over the grounds, some engaged in a game of ball; some lying in the shade of the trees; others were in the gymnasium, and two of their number, for some violation of the rules of the academy, had received orders to remain in their dormitories. The schemers worked to such good advantage that, at the end of a quarter of an hour, ten boys belonging to the society

were gathered in a remote corner of the grounds, awaiting the appearance of Tom and Miller, who had been commissioned to obtain the opinions of the culprits in the dormitories. Thus far every thing appeared to be working smoothly, for all the members had, without hesitation, agreed to join the expedition.

"Hold on a minute!" said Miller, suddenly, as he and Tom started to join their companions. "Don't you see the colonel looking out of his window? That old fellow is as sharp as a steel-trap; and, if he sees so many of us talking in an out-of-the-way place, he'll certainly snuff something. Go and get your foot-ball, and we'll fool him nicely."

Tom ran up to his dormitory, took the ball from his trunk, and, kicking it along the ground before them, they walked toward the place where their companions were gathered, leading the principal to infer that they were simply going out there to amuse themselves. In order to keep up the deception, a game of foot-ball was started, but continued only for a short time, when the Night-hawks seated themselves on the ground to discuss the question in hand. Tom, in a few words, explained the object of the proposed expedition, as well as the manner in which it ought to be conducted to make it successful. So delighted were the boys with the idea, that not a single objection was raised, and, in ten minutes, the business was finished, and the meeting was adjourned. It was decided that the first step should be to obtain the help of the Night-hawks in the village; and, in order to accomplish this, it was resolved that each member of the society in the academy should endeavor to behave himself properly during the re-

mainder of the week, so that, on Saturday, he might be granted a furlough. It was not expected that all would succeed in this, but those who did were to be appointed "commissioners," to state the matter to the village boys, and request their assistance in chartering a vessel, laying in a stock of provisions for the cruise (which would last at least two weeks), and, in fact, completing all the out-door business. The much-dreaded examination was still three weeks distant; so they would have plenty of time in which to complete all their arrangements. When the eventful night arrived, they would make their escape from the academy through the dormitory windows; and, in order to accomplish this, it was necessary for them to have a rope long enough to reach from the third story of the building to the ground, and strong enough to bear their weights. This rope would be furnished by the boys in the village. When Tom made this suggestion, it created something of an uproar among the Night-hawks, several of whom declared that if they were expected to risk their necks by crawling out of a second or third story window, they would have nothing to do with the expedition. But Tom insisted that the rope be procured, saying that "there was no knowing what might happen," and that it was "always well enough to be prepared for any emergency;" and he finally carried his point.

"Now, Martin," said Tom, after the meeting broke up, and the Night-hawks were walking about the grounds in groups of twos and threes, talking over their plans, in excited whispers, "you said you did n't see any use in joining our society. What do you think of it now?"

"If those fellows in the village will help us, I shall say it is a good thing," replied Martin.

"Help us! Of course they will. They dare not refuse. You know that it is one of our laws, that when any member is in trouble, the others must assist him if they can. Now, we are in trouble—or we shall be, if we do n't get away from here before that examination comes off—and they must help us."

During the remainder of the week, the Night-hawks, as they imagined, conducted themselves with the utmost propriety. Each of them had secretly determined that he would obtain a furlough, if within the bounds of possibility, for that would insure him the appointment of "commissioner"—an honor which they all regarded as well worth working for. Tom, with the others, had resolved that he would not waste a single moment; that he would study constantly; pay strict attention to all his duties, and use his best endeavors to have his name placed on the list with those who were to be allowed liberty. He held manfully to his resolution, and surprised his teacher by coming in to his recitations with perfect lessons. But the rules of the academy were very strict, and Tom was an unlucky boy. Although he made improvements in one respect, he fell behind in others; and when Saturday came, and the names of those who were to receive furloughs were posted in the hall, Tom, to his disappointment and indignation, found that his name was not among them.

"Mr. Hudson!" said he, entering the school-room, where his teacher was busy at his desk, "I would like to know what I have done, sir, that I can't have a furlough, like the rest of the boys? I understood you to say that

I had made twenty-four extras this week by perfect lessons."

"Yes," replied Mr. Hudson, "you have made excellent progress, as far as your lessons are concerned, and I assure you I am very glad to be able to say so. But you must remember that, in order to receive liberty, you must strictly conform to *all* the rules and regulations. Didn't you know that it was contrary to law for you to play marbles in your dormitory? and who was it that knocked that picket off the fence, and went outside the grounds without permission?"

"I did, sir," answered Tom. "But I went after my ball."

"That's no excuse; and, more than that, can you tell me the name of the student who went on dress parade with a rusty musket; who left his trunk open, and his clothing scattered about over the floor of his dormitory, and who lost his broadsword besides? The rules do not recognize any mistakes, you know. They call all such things 'disobedience of orders.' But don't be discouraged; try it again, Newcombe."

"O, now, I won't do it," said Tom to himself, as he walked out of the school-room. "There's no use in trying. The more I try to behave myself, the more I fall behind. I knew I never could be a soldier, and I don't see what father wanted to send me to this school for."

When Tom reached the end of the hall, he found the Night-hawks gathered on the porch. They were all disappointed, not one of them having received a furlough. Some had fallen behind in their lessons, while the majority, like Tom, had disobeyed some "little" rule.

"What shall we do now, Newcombe?" asked Miller, in a gloomy voice. "We're up stump, easy enough."

"And all on account of those useless rules," said Rich. "What good does it do to bind a fellow down so tight? If they are so strict now, what will they be during the examination, when we receive visitors?"

"There is but one way out now, that I can see," replied Tom, "and that is, to write a letter to our friends in the village."

"But suppose it should fall into the hands of the Philistines?" said Miller. "What, then?"

"Just leave that to me," said Tom; "I'll not put the letter in the mail-box; I'll send it through in some other way."

There were a good many objections raised to this arrangement, for the Night-hawks all knew that there was danger in it; but, after a little argument, they concluded that Tom's plan was the only one left them, and he and Miller being the oldest members of the society, as well as the highest in rank in the academy, were instructed to write the letter. So, that afternoon, during play-hours, Miller visited Tom in his domitory, and, after the latter had produced writing materials, they sat down to study up the important document.

"Now, Newcombe," said Miller, "you ought to write that letter. You understand the business better than I do, and, besides, you are the highest officer in the society."

But this was not the reason why the fourth colonel wanted Tom to do the work. He doubted the latter's ability to get the letter safely into the hands of the village boys; and, if it should happen to fall into the pos-

session of the principal, the handwriting would tell him where to look to find the guilty one. Thus, Tom was again used as a "cat's paw."

"That's one point settled," continued Miller. "Now, to whom shall we send it?"

"Johnny Harding is the best fellow," answered Tom. "I know he'll help us. But how shall we address him?"

"Why, as it is an official letter from you, as the grand commander of the council, you ought to address him according to his rank. Is he still second corporal?"

"O, no, he made a big jump; one night, when his mother told him to stay in the house, he crawled out of his window and came down the lightning-rod. As his room was in the second story of the building, it was something of a job, I tell you. When he told us about it, we offered to make him a lieutenant, but Johnny said the reward wasn't big enough; and he told us that if we didn't give him something better than that, he would stay in the house the next time his mother ordered him to do so. Well, we couldn't afford to lose Johnny, you know; so the next evening, after school, we all went up to look at the house and the lightning-rod, and we came to the conclusion that there was not another fellow in the society who would dare to attempt a thing like that; so we created the office of fifth captain, and gave it to him."

"Well, he earned it," said Miller. "But if he carries this thing through for us, he will want something higher."

"He ought to have it," replied Tom. "I'll be willing to promise any thing, if he'll only help us."

The Night-hawks then turned their attention to the

letter, and at the end of half an hour it was finished. Miller proved to be an invaluable assistant, and Tom got along much better than he would, had he been left to himself.

The letter ran as follows:

MILITARY ACADEMY,
NEWPORT, August 28, 18—.

Fifth Captain John W. Harding—

SIR: I have been instructed to ask your assistance, according to article fifth of our laws. We are in trouble, and you are in duty bound to help us out. When we tell you that in two weeks from this date we shall be called upon to stand an examination, for which we are totally unprepared, we know that you will sympathize with us. We have decided upon a plan to escape from our troubles, and, with the assistance you can easily render us, it can be successfully carried out.

We intend to desert the academy and go to sea; and, in order to do that, it is, of course, necessary that we should have a vessel large enough to accommodate all the members of our society who may desire to go with us. We wish you to visit the captain of the Swallow, and ask him on what terms he will let us have his sloop for three weeks. Get it as cheap as possible, for we are not very flush of money just at present. We are perfectly willing to pay him in advance, and will promise to take the very best care of his boat. When you hire it, give him to understand that you want it for yourself, to go off on a fishing excursion or something of that kind (which, by the way, will be the truth), and that you do n't want any of his crew on board. We can manage her ourselves. After this has been done, ascertain how many of your boys will accompany us (and we hereby extend an invitation to them all), and then make an estimate of the amount of provisions we shall require. Each boy is expected to furnish an equal share of money with which to foot all our bills.

Please answer as soon as possible, and bring or send your letter to the south side of the grounds, outside the fence; but do n't

speak to any one unless he proves himself to be a friend. We have lately admitted some new members to our society; and, as you fellows in the village are not acquainted with them, it is necessary that you should be very careful.

We also need a long rope, strong enough to bear one's weight, to assist us in making our escape from the building.

Now, captain, look alive. Remember, we want the boat and provisions ready two weeks from next Monday. Also bear in mind that the success of our expedition depends upon you alone.

Very respectfully,

THOMAS NEWCOMBE,

Grand Commander of the Council.

"There!" said Tom, with a long breath of relief, "it's finished at last. That's a splendid letter, and it covers all the ground. Now," he continued, as he folded it up and placed it in an envelope, "the next thing is to get it safely to the post-office."

"Yes; and that's the most dangerous part of the undertaking," said Miller. "That's a useless rule the colonel made, about putting all letters in the mail-box. Now, Newcombe, mind what you are about, or you'll be brought up with a round turn. Then look out for the guard-house."

"Never mind me," said Tom, as he put a stamp on the envelope. "I'll fix that all right."

After the letter had been sealed and addressed, the two conspirators left the dormitory, and Miller walked off toward the ball-ground, while Tom loitered about in the hall. The students whose names were on the "liberty list," were leaving the academy to visit the village, and, among them were several who had but recently been admitted to the school. Presently a new scholar, who belonged to dormitory H, came out of the princi-

pal's room with a pass in his hand; and Tom, walking carelessly toward him, accosted him with:

"Hallo, Simmonds! Off for the village, I suppose?"

"Yes," replied the new student. "I am one of the lucky ones this week."

"You are fortunate, that's a fact," said Tom. "But Simmonds," he continued, as he accompanied the new scholar toward the gate, "will you do a favor for me?"

"I will," replied the other, readily.

"Then mail this letter for me," said Tom, producing it.

"Is n't that against the rules?" asked Simmonds, hesitatingly.

"What! mailing a letter? Now, Bill, who's been stuffing you? Here, take it, and don't be a greeny!"

The new student evidently did not like to be considered a "greeny," for, without further hesitation, he took the letter and put it into his pocket. Tom stood watching him until he had closed the gate, and was well on his way toward the village; and then, congratulating himself on the success of his plans, walked toward the ball-ground and joined his companions.

CHAPTER XX.

PLANS AND ARRANGEMENTS.

"WELL, how is it now?" inquired Rich, as Tom approached the spot where all the Night-hawks were standing, listening to Miller's description of the letter that had just been written. "Have you succeeded?"

"Of course," replied the grand commander. "We are all right, so far. The document is half-way to the post-office by this time."

"That makes me feel a little easier," said Miller. "But I shall shake in my boots until we get an answer to it."

"Humph!" exclaimed Tom, contemptuously. "I guess I know what I am about. If you don't think that I am able to manage this business, you had better give it into the hands of some one else."

"O, we are not afraid to trust you," said one of the new members; "but you don't know the old colonel as well as we do. He knows a thing or two, and if he don't find out something about this business, I shall be most agreeably surprised. So mind what you are about."

"Now, never mind me," replied Tom, confidently. "I tell you I know just what I am doing. We'll have an

answer within forty-eight hours. That's not long to wait."

But, on this point, Tom soon changed his mind. Two days, he found, was a long time to wait, especially for one so impatient as he was. The hours seemed lengthened into weeks; and, as if to make the time hang more heavily on his hands, he failed in all his lessons, was obliged to stand guard at night, and, on the second day, received orders to remain in his dormitory during play-hours. This was very provoking. He fully expected Johnny Harding would be on hand that evening with an answer to his letter, and he wanted to meet him, in order that he might have a long talk with him, and learn exactly what the boys in the village thought of their scheme. But he had faithful friends upon whom he could depend, and when dress-parade was over, and he was about to ascend to his quarters, he found opportunity to whisper to several of the Night-hawks to "keep an eye open," which they all readily promised to do.

Tom had not been mistaken in his calculations when he had selected Johnny Harding as the most reliable member of the society, for, about half-past four o'clock, the fifth captain, in obedience to the instructions he had received from his chief, made his appearance on the south side of the grounds. He walked rapidly along the road, watching the games that were going on inside the inclosure, when a ball, propelled by some vigorous striker, bounded over the fence and fell into the road before him.

"I say, my friend!" shouted one of the students.

"Say it yourself!" replied Johnny, good-naturedly.

"Will you be kind enough to throw that ball back

here? You were just in time to be of assistance to us," continued the student, as Johnny pitched the ball back into the grounds. "We are not allowed to go over this fence."

"That's all right," said Johnny. "I don't need any thanks. Perhaps some of you can do as much for me now. Have any of you seen a large bow-kite over this way?"

"No," answered several of the students. "Have you lost one?"

"If you find one," continued the messenger, "with the word Nantucket painted on it in large capital letters, you may know that it is mine; and I would be greatly obliged if you would keep it safe until I call for it."

"All right," answered the students. "If we find it, we'll return it to you in good order."

"That fellow must have been hard up for names to call his kite Nantucket," said one of the boys, as soon as Johnny was out of hearing. "Nobody but a country chap would ever have thought of calling a kite by that name."

"No success thus far," soliloquized Johnny, as he continued his walk. "Not a Night-hawk among those fellows. I hope they won't waste much valuable time in looking for that kite. Hallo! here's one of 'em, or I am greatly mistaken."

He had discovered a boy seated under one of the trees in the school grounds, apparently deeply interested in a book which he held in his hand.

"Ahem!" said Johnny, looking straight down the road, and hurrying along faster than ever.

"Ahem " answered the student.

Johnny stopped as suddenly as if the boy had called him by name, and, walking up to the fence, inquired:

"Have you seen any thing of a large bow-kite over this way—"

And here the fifth captain stopped and looked at the student, as if he expected him to finish the sentence. He had found the right man at last, for the academy boy continued:

"With the word Nantucket painted on it in large capital letters?"

"That's the one!" said Johnny, eagerly. "Have you seen it?"

"Yes, it's safe," replied the student, who arose to his feet, and, after glancing about the grounds, to satisfy himself that no one was observing his movements, he walked carelessly to the fence, and handed Johnny a slip of paper. It was his "certificate of membership," and, when the fifth captain read it, he knew that he had found a friend.

"That's all right!" said Johnny. "Here's a letter for Newcombe. I haven't done as well as I expected to do, and, unless I get new orders, the whole expedition is hard and fast aground. Here's the rope?" he continued, pulling a bundle, tied up in a newspaper, from under his coat. "So Tom has brought in new members? We're glad of it—the more the merrier, you know. Good-by! If you ever visit the village, don't fail to call on me."

So saying, Johnny walked off, while the Night-hawk, after putting the letter into his pocket, and concealing the rope under his coat, bent his steps toward the

academy, and presently entered the dormitory, where the grand commander was confined. When the new member entered the room, he gave his chief a significant wink, which told Tom as plainly as words that the long-wished-for letter had at last arrived. The latter could scarcely restrain himself, so impatient was he to examine its contents. But it was necessary to be very careful, for there were several students in the room, some, like Tom, confined for misdemeanors, while others, having grown tired of play, were busy with their books; and, to give any of these a hint of what was going on, would endanger not only the success of the expedition, but the liberties of all engaged in it.

Tom, however, played his part to perfection. Without appearing to take any notice of the Night-hawks, he walked to the further end of the room; and the new member, after loitering about, and conversing with some of the students, found an opportunity to put the letter and rope under the pillow on Tom's bed. The movement was skillfully executed, and no one but the grand commander noticed it. There was now but little danger of discovery; but Tom, who still thought it necessary to be very cautious, did not go near his bed for half an hour. Then, after a little maneuvering, he managed to hide the rope in his trunk and to read Johnny's letter, which, brief and to the point, told how the fifth captain had performed the business intrusted to him. In the first place, he informed his chief that he had been unable to charter a vessel; for, as the fifth captain expressed it, "there was not a single ship-owner in the village who would be foolish enough to allow a parcel of green boys to go off alone in his vessel;" so, unless the boys at the academy

changed their programme, they might as well abandon the idea of escaping their examination. Johnny wound up his letter by telling his chief that the surest way to get a boat was to capture her; and by informing him that he would be at the south side of the grounds on the following afternoon, at five o'clock, to receive his answer.

On the whole, Tom was very well pleased with the letter. He had, in the beginning, proposed to capture a vessel, or to "take her and welcome," which was the same thing, but his friends had opposed it. Now they would be obliged to fall in with his plans, which would be another feather in his cap, for it would, perhaps, serve to convince the Night-hawks that they ought to pay more attention to what he said to them. He was very anxious to escape the examination, but he did not want any one to assist him in making the necessary arrangements. He wanted the boys to obey all his orders, and he would rather the enterprise should be defeated under his own management, than prove a success under the control of any one else.

After a few moments' consideration, Tom decided that he would not write an answer to Johnny's letter, but that he would behave himself the next day so that he would be granted liberty with the others during play-time. He could then see the fifth captain, and talk the matter over with him. He felt greatly encouraged. If he had entertained any doubts as to the ultimate success of the undertaking, they were all gone now, for Johnny had shown that he could be depended upon—that he would faithfully carry out all instructions he might receive, which would render failure impossible.

When Miller and Rich marched down to supper that

evening, Tom succeeded in slipping the letter into their hands, and the wink which they gave the chief, when they met in the school-room, told Tom that his friends had read the letter and pondered upon its contents.

The next day Tom began work in earnest. He studied hard, although that was a most difficult task, for his thoughts would sometimes wander away from his books in spite of all he could do to prevent it. He paid strict attention to all his duties, and was, of course, allowed liberty at play-time. Then he could not help thinking how much better he always felt, when he behaved himself so that he could be allowed privileges with the others, than he did when he was scolded and punished for his offenses.

"Now, boys," said he, as the Night-hawks met on the ball-ground, "I suppose you have all read that letter I gave to Miller last night; so let's hear from you. What have you got to say about it?"

A long and somewhat stormy debate followed Tom's question, and the point of difference was, the manner in which they ought to go to work to secure a vessel. Among the Night-hawks there was scarcely one who would hesitate to appropriate such small articles as apples, peaches, or water-melons, "just for the fun of the thing;" but they were all afraid to risk the serious matter of making off with a boat that did not belong to them, no matter how much fun and excitement there might be in it. Tom, however, had thought the matter over, and was ready with an answer to this argument. Although they should take a vessel without asking the owner's permission, they would not steal her, for it was their intention to return the boat in just as good order

as they found it. A sloop was n't worth more than a dollar a day; and just before they got ready to start, they would mail a letter to the owner of the boat, enclosing twelve or fourteen dollars; and, when he found that his boat came back safe and sound, and that he had received good pay for her, he would n't grumble. This plan silenced the fears of the timid members of the society, who finally agreed to act according to Tom's suggestion.

The next question that arose was in regard to the expenses of the cruise. The chief demanded two dollars from each boy present, which astonished the Night-hawks, who declared that Tom was altogether too extravagant. But the latter again carried his point, and the sum of twenty-eight dollars was collected, and placed in his hands, to be given to Johnny Harding as their share of the expenses, and Tom was instructed to meet the fifth captain, and make all the necessary arrangements with him. All these questions being satisfactorily settled, the boys separated, and, while the majority of them joined in various games about the grounds, Tom seated himself under a tree, near the fence, to await the arrival of Johnny Harding. Punctually at the time appointed the latter was on hand, and, at the end of a quarter of an hour, Tom returned to his companions, highly elated with the result of the interview, while Johnny slowly and thoughtfully retraced his steps toward the village.

With the exception of the escape from the academy building, which the Night-hawks would be obliged to accomplish without assistance from outsiders, Johnny now had the most difficult and dangerous task to per-

form. His orders were to provision the Sweepstakes—a little schooner that lay in the creek in front of the village—and get her in readiness for the cruise; and, to accomplish this, without giving the Philistines a hint of what was going on, was a feat requiring all the skill and judgment the fifth captain could command. It was rather out of his line of business; but Johnny, who had decided to accompany the expedition, and who delighted in such exploits, was not discouraged by the difficulties he found in his path. That there was a way to successfully carry out his instructions, he did not, for a moment, doubt; and, if any body could ascertain how it ought to be done, he was the one.

Half an hour's walk brought him to the village, through which he passed to the creek where the Sweepstakes lay at her anchorage; and here Johnny sat down on a pile of lumber, to take a view of the situation, and to determine upon some course of action. His first business must be to buy the provisions. Tom had told him to lay in enough for twenty boys, and he had already made an estimate of the amount that would be required. What would the grocer think when he ordered two barrels of soda crackers, a kit of mackerel, a dozen codfish, and a whole cheese? Then, after the provisions had been purchased, how was he to get them on board of the schooner, which lay in the creek, about fifty yards from the shore? This must be done during the night, and, perhaps, they might be observed by some one who would ask very disagreeable questions.

"Well, well!" said Johnny, taking off his hat and scratching his curly head, "this is a bigger job than I bargained for. Nobody in the world but Tom New-

combe would ever have thought of such a desperate enterprise. I believe I would rather stand the examination, for there would n't be half so much danger in it. But if the others are willing to risk it, I know I am. I 'll go on board the schooner, and see if she is all ready for use!"

There were several skiffs in the creek, and Johnny, knowing that he could carry out his resolution without exciting suspicion, walked down the bank, stepped into one of the boats, and pushed off toward the Sweepstakes. A few strokes of the oars brought him alongside, and, after making the skiff fast to the fore-chains, he clambered over the side, and began the examination. He had expected to find that the little vessel had been partly dismantled, and that some repairs would be necessary; but, to his delight, he found that nothing had been removed. The sails were all there, neatly stowed away, the handspikes were in their places, so that the anchor could be hove-up with very little trouble, the hold was empty, and in a condition to receive the provisions, and there were two large casks, that would hold an ample supply of water. The cabin was in order, and had bunks enough to accommodate six or eight boys. Of course there were no beds in the bunks, but Johnny scarcely gave that a moment's thought. If want of beds was the only obstacle in his way, that could have been easily overcome.

As the fifth captain walked about the vessel, several interesting questions, which he had not before thought of, arose in his mind, such as, Who would sleep in the cabin, and who in the forecastle? Who would cook their meals, and what boys would be willing to act as

the crew? Was Rich, who, it was understood, was to be captain of the vessel, seaman enough to take the schooner down the creek, and through all the shipping that lay at the wharves, without accident? Was he navigator enough to take them where they wished to go, or to bring them back to the village, when their cruise was ended? Could he manage the Sweepstakes if they should happen to be caught out in a storm? Johnny, at first, had serious misgivings on all these important points, and, for a time, he pondered upon the propriety of suggesting to the academy boys that a "board of examiners" be appointed, to inquire into Rich's knowledge of seamanship and navigation, and to decide whether or not he was the one that ought to be the captain of the vessel. Had Johnny held to this resolution, it might have saved the Night-hawks some trouble; but, after thinking it over, the fifth captain came to the conclusion that he would say nothing about the matter. If Captain Rich proved to be a humbug, it was no business of his. He would faithfully attend to his part of the work, and leave all disputes to be settled when they arose.

Johnny slept but little that night. Various plans, by which he might carry out the instructions he had received from the grand commander, suggested themselves to him, but in every one of them he found numerous difficulties to be overcome. His great desire was to accomplish his part of the business without being obliged to answer any questions. At last he concluded that the best way was to go about it openly and above board; for the more he tried to cover it up, and to keep the affair a profound secret, the more certain he

became that it would "leak out somewhere." About two miles outside the harbor was Block Island, where the village boys often went to fish and hunt, and Johnny thought he could buy his provisions, and take them out there, without exciting the suspicion of any one. The Sweepstakes could stop there and take them on board as she went out, and it would not delay her a quarter of an hour. On the following morning, he communicated this plan to some of the village Night-hawks, (four of whom had agreed to accompany the students on their cruise,) who readily agreed that it was the best, and promised to lend all the assistance in their power in carrying it out.

When Saturday morning came, Johnny was up bright and early; and as soon as he had eaten his breakfast, he borrowed a large yawl, and, accompanied by half a dozen boys, sailed down the creek, until they arrived at Mr. Newcombe's wharf, which, they thought, would be the most convenient place to load their provisions. They then went in a body to Mr. Henry's store, and, as Johnny had expected, the grocer opened his eyes in astonishment when he received the order for the provisions; but, thinking that the boys were about to start on one of their hunting and fishing expeditions, he merely said:

"I suppose you don't intend to shoot many squirrels, or catch many fish, since you are laying in so large a stock of something to eat."

Johnny replied that they did not intend to suffer for want of food, if they could help it; and after he had paid for the provisions, they were placed upon a dray and taken to the yawl, where they were soon loaded by

the boys, who set sail for Block Island. In due time they arrived at their destination, and, after a short consultation with a farmer who lived on the island, their cargo was stowed in his barn for safe keeping.

"Now," said Johnny, when they were ready to return to the village, "if nothing happens, we shall be here after those goods next Monday night. I suppose it does n't make any difference to you what time we come?"

"O, none at all," replied the farmer. "If you will call me when you come, I 'll lend you a hand. I hope you will be successful."

"Thank you, sir!" answered Johnny, with a sly wink at his companions; "so do we."

The man did not mean that he hoped the boys would be successful in running away from the academy, or in making off with a boat that did not belong to them, but that they might be fortunate in catching fish, and shooting squirrels and quails; for he thought it was their intention to camp somewhere on the island.

The Night-hawks then returned to the village, and Johnny, to his delight, was not called upon to answer any unpleasant questions. The very boldness of his plan had removed suspicion. His part of the work was now done; it only remained for Tom and his companions to effect their escape from the academy.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ESCAPE.

"I AM happy to inform you that I have done all my part of the work, according to orders. The provisions have been purchased, and are now safely stowed away in a farmer's barn, on Block Island. The Sweepstakes is ready for the cruise; and I will see that every thing is kept in order, so that when you are ready to start, we can put to sea with the least possible trouble. No one in the village has the slightest suspicion that any thing is in the wind. I hope you will be as fortunate as I have been."

So ran a note which Tom received from Johnny Harding, on Tuesday afternoon, and which he showed to his friends on the ball-ground. It is needless to say that the Night-hawks were delighted with the success of their plans; and the new members looked upon Tom and Johnny as the two smartest boys in existence.

Attempts to desert the academy were very uncommon, and, as all the boys well knew, had failed more frequently than they had proved successful; and so great an undertaking as Tom had suggested, had never before entered into the head of the most reckless student. The conspirators, with but very few exceptions, had never imagined that the grand commander's scheme could be suc-

cessfully carried out. They had given their consent to it, not because they hoped to be able to escape the examination, but because they wanted something exciting with which to occupy their minds; and even Rich and Miller, who had long been acquainted with Tom, and who knew pretty nearly what he could do, had often predicted that the grand commander's plan would prove to be but a sure way of bringing every member of the society to certain and speedy punishment. The colonel, they said, would certainly "snuff something," and the first thing they knew, they would all find themselves in the guard-house, living on bread and water. This was the reason why they had kept in the background as much as possible, and allowed Tom to do all the work. If they were discovered, he, being the leader, would be the most severely punished. But when Tom showed these two worthies the note he had just received from the fifth captain, they found that they had been mistaken. The outside work had all been accomplished without giving any one a hint of what was going on, and they began to believe that Tom was in earnest, and that, perhaps, he might, after all, manage affairs so that they could avoid the examination, and have a "jolly time on their own hook." But still there was chance for failure; and, although they took a prominent part in all the "business meetings"—which were held as often as the Night-hawks could get together—they always endeavored to have it understood that Tom was the leader of the conspiracy.

Monday, the day on which the examination was to commence, was still a long way off. Five days of lessons and drills must be endured before the time for action

arrived, and the excited Night-hawks hardly believed that they should be able to live through them. Time moved on laggard wings; but the boys survived, in spite of hard lessons and extra guard-duty at night, and, finally, the eventful day arrived. The examination commenced that morning, and, as the Night-hawks had made no preparation for it, they fell sadly behindhand in all their lessons. The result had shown them exactly what they might have expected; and, when dress parade was over, and the members of the society met in an unfrequented part of the grounds, to hold their last council at the academy, they were very much excited, and they were ready to risk almost any thing to escape the remaining six days of examination.

"I tell you what it is, fellows," said one of the new members, "I never did like this business; but I'm in for it now. I could n't live through a week's work such as we had to-day."

"We're in a bad fix," chimed in another. "If we stay here, we are certain to be placed under arrest, while the other fellows are in camp enjoying themselves; and if we are caught in our attempt to take French leave, of course we shall be put into the guard-house."

"Are you going to back out?" asked Rich.

"O, no; I'm going to stick to you. But I can't help thinking that we are in a very unpleasant situation."

"We can't help it," said Tom. "We are not going to stay here, and be put under arrest; that's settled. Of course, we run something of a risk in trying to escape; but we can't help that, either. I hope you did n't think that, when we got ready to go, the colonel would give us all a furlough for two or three weeks? At any rate

it's too late to back out. Now for business! I hope that you have all concluded that my plan is the best."

Tom's plan for escape was by making use of the rope —a clothes'-line—which, with the assistance of some of his friends, he had doubled and twisted; but it was still long enough to reach from the third story of the building to the ground. After the rope had been procured, it was a long time before any of the conspirators, except Rich and Miller, would consent to use it. The thought of lowering themselves down, from a second or third story window, with a clothes'-line, even though it was doubled and twisted, was enough to make them shudder. One of the new members had proposed to file a key to fit one of the outside doors, which were locked by the teachers, every night at nine o'clock; but this plan was at once voted down by the others, who argued that, even if they possessed a key that would open the door, they could not pass the sentries in the hall. Another desperate fellow, who had been reading a story of a mutiny at sea, proposed that they should knock the sentinels down, and tie them hand and foot. A third suggested that the Night-hawks be instructed to conceal themselves in different parts of the building, until the other students and the teachers had all gone to bed, when they would make their escape through the school-room windows. These and many other plans had been proposed and discussed; but, at last, the conspirators were compelled to acknowledge that Tom's idea was the best. True, it was rather dangerous and even Tom himself hardly expected that it would be successful; but still, it promised better than any that had been proposed, and the grand commander was determined to attempt it.

The dormitory to which Miller and Rich belonged was in the third story of the academy, and directly over that occupied by Tom, Martin, and three or four other members of the society. Miller was to take possession of the rope, and, at midnight, open the third window from the front of the building, fasten one end of the rope securely to his bedstead, and throw the other to the ground. The boys in the upper dormitory were to make their descent first, and then those who belonged to dormitory H. Just as these plans had been determined upon, the ringing of the supper-bell broke up the council.

"Now, boys," said Tom, "be very careful. Do n't go to sleep to-night; and, whatever you do, do n't make noise enough to disturb any outsiders."

The Night-hawks separated, and, although many of them felt like criminals, no one who met them, as they entered the academy, had reason for supposing that any thing unusual was going on. Of course they were intensely excited, and more than one held his breath when he thought of hanging by a clothes'-line from a third story window. Tom, Rich, and Miller were the only ones who appeared to be unconcerned. They did not stop to think of the risk they were about to run; they thought only of the fine time they expected to have during the cruise, and how astonished the principal and all the teachers would be when they discovered that fourteen students had "taken French."

At nine o'clock the conspirators marched, with the others, from the school-room to their dormitories, and, half an hour later, were all in bed, and, apparently, fast asleep. At eleven o'clock Mr. Hudson passed through

dormitory H, and saw the grand commander lying with his head covered up in the quilts; but he did not notice that he snored louder than usual. Tom's snoring, however, was not genuine. He was wide-awake, and, when Mr. Hudson entered his room and closed his door, the chief conspirator cautiously raised the quilts from his head and looked about. The lights in the dormitory burned dimly, and nothing disturbed the stillness save the gentle breathing of the sleepers, and the measured tread of the sentinels in the hall. After satisfying himself that all "outsiders" were sound asleep, Tom arose from the bed and pulled on his trowsers. He then wrapped his boots up in his coat, and, after casting a suspicious glance about the room, he cautiously raised the window at the head of his bed, and threw the bundle to the ground. After carefully closing the window, he again got into bed, no one but the wide-awake Night-hawks having witnessed his movements. Tom was greatly encouraged. If he could raise the window once without awaking any of his forty-eight sleeping room-mates, he could certainly do it again. From that moment he looked upon his escape as a settled thing, and he began to be impatient for Rich and Miller to begin operations. The latter, however, remembering their instructions, made no move until midnight, and the grand commander began to fear that they had disgracefully "backed out." But presently he heard a noise that caused him to chuckle to himself, and to look toward the beds of the apparently sleeping Night-hawks, who, in fact, were as wide-awake as himself, and listening with all their ears. It was a grating, hissing sound, as if some heavy body was being lowered

slowly, cautiously, down the side of the building. The Night-hawks in the upper dormitory were beginning to make their escape. There could be no mistake about it, and Tom began to be really excited now, his heart thumping against his ribs with a noise that frightened him. Slowly and steadily the body descended, and, in a few moments, Tom heard the rope tapping against the wall, showing that the boy, whoever he was, had reached the ground in safety. For five minutes all was silent, and then the same grating noise told the grand commander that a second boy was descending the rope. During the half hour that followed, the operation was repeated eight times, and Tom, who knew just how many boys there were in the dormitory above him who belonged to the Night-hawks, prepared to take his turn. After glancing cautiously about the room, in order to make sure that no "outsiders" in his dormitory had been alarmed, he arose from his bed, and, with trembling hands, arranged the quilts so that a careless observer would not have noticed that it was empty; then he stepped to the window, which he raised without making noise enough to disturb a cricket. Thrusting his arm out into the darkness, he clutched the rope, which was still suspended from the room above, and crawled carefully out of the window. The next moment he found himself dangling in the air thirty feet from the ground. His position was now a trying one. The clothes'-line cut into his hands, every thing below him was concealed by Egyptian darkness, and it is natural to suppose that the boy who was afraid to ascend the mast of a schooner felt his courage giving away when he found himself hanging from a second-story window. But Tom, re-

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membering that ten boys had already made the descent in safety, and knowing that there were three more Night-hawks in the building waiting to make their escape, and that the least awkwardness on his part might alarm the sentries, clung to the rope with a death-gripe, and manfully choked back the cry for help that involuntarily arose to his lips. Slowly, cautiously, he worked his way downward, and presently an encouraging whisper came up through the darkness—"That's the way to do it, Newcombe. You're a brick. Go easy!" and the next moment the grand commander slid down the rope into the arms of his friends, receiving their congratulations apparently as unconcerned as if he had never in his life experienced the sentiment of fear.

Tom's first care, upon finding himself safe on the ground, was to hunt up his coat and boots. By the time this was done, another boy had made his escape, and, in a quarter of an hour more, the last member of the society had been seized and embraced by his exultant friends.

"Who would have thought it, boys?" whispered Rick. "I tell you we have done something now worth bragging about. Won't the old colonel open his eyes?"

"No time to talk, fellows!" whispered Tom. "Don't laugh till you are out of the woods. Come on, let's be off."

So saying, the grand commander, now as proud of his position as if he had been a brigadier-general, led the way toward the south side of the grounds, where a picket had been knocked off the fence the day before, to assist them in making their escape.

The Night-hawks were all astonished at their suc-

cess, as well they might be. Not only had they thrown all their former exploits completely into the shade, but they had accomplished a feat that would be an interesting passage in the history of the Newport Military Academy, as long as that institution should stand. They pressed one another's hands in silence as they walked along through the grounds, and more than one gave Tom a complimentary slap on the back, accompanied by the whispered exclamation:

"Newcombe, you are a jolly old brick! It takes you to manage such business as this!"

Tom easily found the place where the picket had been removed, and one after another of the boys squeezed themselves through the opening until they all stood in the road.

"Now, then," said Tom; "I know we're all right, but the faster we go, the more time we shall gain. Forward, double-quick."

So elated were the deserters, that they could scarcely refrain from shouting; but, knowing that they were not yet safe, they gave vent to their exultant feelings by cutting astonishing capers as they ran along the road. Just before they arrived at the village, they separated into a half a dozen little parties, and, following different roads, bent their steps toward the creek where the Sweepstakes lay at her anchorage. In half an hour they were all assembled at the lumber-pile, where they were met by Johnny Harding and his four friends, in a state of considerable excitement.

"O, fellows," whispered the fifth captain, wildly throwing his arms about, "we're aground, and a thousand miles from water!"

"You do n't say so!" exclaimed all the boys at once.

"Yes, I do say it!" answered Johnny. "The whole thing is knocked into a cocked hat; the expedition is as dead as a herring. Go back to the academy, take your punishment like men, and say no more about it."

"But what's the matter?" asked Tom, impatiently.

"Just look out there!" said Johnny, pointing toward the creek. "Do you see the Sweepstakes anywhere? No, you do n't! Squire Thompson suddenly took it into his head that he would like to go on a fishing excursion, and he 's gone; he won't be back for a week."

The Night-hawks were astounded at this intelligence. After congratulating themselves on the gallant and skillful manner in which they had made their escape from the academy, and looking forward so eagerly and confidently to the consummation of all their plans, this disheartening piece of news came upon them like a thunder clap from a clear sky. They had placed themselves in danger all for nothing; for, if their boat was gone, they might as well be at the academy.

"O, now, I'm the most unlucky boy in the whole world!" drawled Tom. "Something is always happening to bother me. I never can do any thing! But I knew all the time just how it would turn out!"

"You did?" exclaimed Rich, angrily. "Then what did you get us in this miserable scrape for? We are all a parcel of blockheads. We ought to have had sense enough to know that such a scheme as this never could succeed. I throw up my appointment as commander of the vessel."

"No doubt you do," said Miller, who seemed to take the matter more coolly than any one else. "It 's very

easy to throw up your command after our vessel is gone. But, Johnny, why did n't you send us word of this? You 've got us into a pretty mess."

"I did n't know that the Sweepstakes was gone until seven o'clock to-night," replied the fifth captain, "and it was too late to send you word then."

"Well, somebody suggest something!" said Miller. "Come, Newcombe, have your wits all left you? We are in a bad scrape, and we must get out, if possible. Let 's hear from you!"

"O, now, I 've got nothing to say!" drawled Tom, who was walking thoughtfully up and down the lumber-pile. "We 're booked for the guard-house, easy enough. I always was an unlucky boy."

He was thinking, not what plan he ought to adopt to extricate himself and companions from their unpleasant situation, but how he might avoid punishment when he returned to the academy.

"We are not in the guard-house yet," replied Miller; "and I, for one, do n't intend to go there until we have had our cruise. Johnny, did you mail that letter to 'Squire Thompson, as you intended?"

"Of course not; what was the use of paying for his boat until we were certain that we could get her? I 've got the letter in my pocket now, with fourteen dollars in it. By the way, you academy fellows owe us a quarter of a dollar apiece. You did n't give us money enough to settle all the bills."

"We 'll pay you, Johnny," said Tom, who, from some cause or another, seemed in a fair way to recover his usual spirits. "But do you know where the Swallow is?"

"That's so!" exclaimed Johnny, excitedly. "Where is she? She's at your father's wharf, that's where she is. I saw her there this evening. I have been so upset by losing the Sweepstakes that I didn't think we could capture some other vessel just as well."

"The captain of the Swallow doesn't generally leave a watch on board his vessel when he's in port, does he?" inquired Tom.

"No, he don't; we're all right yet. All hands stand by to get ship under way. Come ahead, boys."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Tom, who, now that he saw a way out of the difficulty, was quite willing to resume the management of affairs; "we must separate. No more than two of us ought to go together, for we may be seen, you know, even at this hour. Pair off, and meet again on my father's wharf as soon as possible."

In obedience to these orders, the boys separated, and in a few moments Tom, accompanied by Johnny Harding, arrived at the wharf, where the Night-hawks were all assembled The Swallow was moored at the wharf, and the boys were encouraged when they saw that her deck was deserted.

"Now, then," said Miller, in a low whisper, "how do we know but there are men on board that vessel?"

"Some one ought to go and see," said Rich. "You do it, Newcombe. You are the strongest and bravest fellow in the party, and we would rather trust you than any other fellow."

Tom would have been much better pleased if some one else had been selected to perform this rather dangerous piece of business. What if there was a watch on board the Swallow, and he should be discovered? What

excuse could he make for being away from the academy at such an unusual hour, and for prowling about where he had no business? Tom asked himself these questions, but still he could not refuse to play the part of spy, for not only was he utterly unable to resist flattery, but he did not dare to make an exhibition of cowardice before the new members of the society, for he was anxious to establish a reputation among them. In as steady a voice as he could command, he replied:

"If you fellows will go behind the office, out of sight, I'll do it."

As soon as the Night-hawks had concealed themselves, Tom walked across the wharf on tip-toe, climbed over the rail of the sloop, and looked about him. He took two things in at a glance. The cabin doors were closed, which was good evidence that she was deserted, and there were no other vessels lying at his father's wharf. This was a very favorable circumstance for the runaways. All the large vessels in the harbor, of course, kept a night-watch; and, if the boys should be discovered making off with the sloop, there might be some trouble. Having noted these two points, Tom crossed the deck, opened the cabin-doors, and disappeared from the view of the Night-hawks, who, closely watching all his movements, held themselves in readiness to take to their heels and leave their grand commander to his fate, if he should be discovered. But the cabin was found to be empty; for the captain, not dreaming that any one would disturb his vessel, had not thought it necessary to leave a watch on board.

"We are all right now, boys," whispered Tom, when he had reported the result of his investigations to his

companions; "and I propose that Rich be allowed to assume authority as captain of the vessel."

"Agreed," said all the boys.

"Now, Rich," continued Tom, "we are ready to hear your orders. Be lively."

"Well, then," said the captain, hurriedly, "all you landlubbers go on board that vessel, and remain in the cabin, out of sight, until we get out of the harbor; and all you fellows, who have been to sea, stay with me."

When the "landlubbers" had obeyed the order, Rich found that he had a crew of eight boys.

"Johnny," said Tom, "address that letter you have in your pocket to the captain of the Swallow, and put it in the post-office."

"I've got no pen," replied Johnny; "and how can I see to address the letter without a light?"

"Go aboard the ship," commanded Captain Rich, "and no doubt you will find writing materials there. The next thing," he continued, as Johnny ran off to obey the order, "is to appoint my officers. As you have managed this thing so far, Newcombe, I'll reward you by making you my first mate. Miller, you will be second; and Johnny Harding, when he comes back, shall be third."

Some of the boys were a good deal disappointed by this arrangement, for all those who had been to sea, had made calculations on receiving some office. But it had been decided beforehand, that the captain should be allowed to select his own officers; and, as all the boys were impatient to get to sea, they did not raise any objections.

"So far, so good," said Rich, as he walked up and

took a survey of the vessel he was to command. "The next step is to get her out to the end of the pier. Miller, jump aboard and get out a stern-line. Newcombe, find something that will do for a tow-line; make one end fast on board, and lead the other round the starboard side of the vessel back to the wharf."

"What's that for?" exclaimed Tom. "That isn't the best way to turn her around."

"Newcombe!" said Rich, angrily, "I am the captain of this vessel, and you must do as you are ordered, without stopping to ask questions."

"O, now, see here!" drawled Tom, "I want you to understand that the government of this society is democratic, and I have a right to have my say."

"And I also want you to understand that I have been ordered to take this vessel to sea, and that I'm going to do it," said Captain Rich. "If you don't get a tow-line out very soon, I'll appoint another first mate."

This threat alarmed Tom, who, without further parley, sprang on board the sloop and hastened to carry out his orders.

"All ready for'ard," said he, when he had got out the tow-line.

"All ready aft," repeated Miller.

"Man the tow-line," said Captain Rich.

In obedience to this order, the crew, now numbering five boys, who were still on the wharf, took hold of the rope.

"Cast off for'ard," continued the captain, "and shove off. Run away with the tow-line."

As these commands were obeyed, the bow of the

sloop swung around, and, when the stern-line was cast off, she came about, and her bow pointed out to sea. The boys who held the tow-line, pulled her to the end of the pier, where she was again made fast.

"Has n't Johnny got back yet?" asked Rich.

"Yes, here I am," answered the fifth captain, who had run all the way from the wharf to the post-office and back. "I've mailed the letter, and the old captain will get his fourteen dollars in the morning. It's all right; he won't grumble."

"What did you say in the letter?" asked Tom.

"I said: Sir—Inclosed herewith please find fourteen dollars, to pay for the use of your boat for two weeks. Yours, truly—blank. I did n't sign any name to it."

"All aboard!" said Rich. "Newcombe, stand by to get under way."

At this stage of the proceedings, it became evident that the first mate of the Swallow was either sadly ignorant of ship discipline, or else that he was determined to set it aside altogether, and establish a routine of his own; for, when the captain gave the order, "Stand by to get under way," Tom, instead of stationing his crew and awaiting further commands, gave the order—

"Unloose the sails—all of 'em—hoist away lively."

But his object was to get to sea as soon as possible, and these orders, no doubt, answered his purpose as well as any others, for the crew understood them. In a few moments the mainsail and jib were spread, and the Swallow began to careen as she caught the wind, as if impatient to be off.

"Harry Green!" said Rich, calling to one of his crew. "Go to the wheel. Cast off."

Slowly the sloop swung away from the pier, the wind filled the sails, and she began to move toward the blue water.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PURSUIT COMMENCED.

NEVER before had the gallant little sloop been manned by such an excited and delighted crew as the runaways were at that moment. They had escaped the examination, and instead of remaining at the academy, under arrest, while their companions were enjoying themselves in camp, they would soon be miles at sea, and beyond the control of the principal. The danger, they imagined, was over, at least until morning, when their absence would be discovered, and the pursuit commenced. That they would be followed, none of them, for a moment, doubted; for they knew that the principal was not the man to permit his authority to be set at defiance with impunity. He would make every effort to capture them, and his former exploits in this line had shown that he was very expert at catching deserters. Besides, although they had paid the captain of the Swallow for the use of his boat for two weeks, they did not expect that he would be altogether satisfied with the arrangement. Tom and Johnny had assured their companions that he "would n't grumble," but they had said that merely to silence the fears of the timid members of the society, for they knew that the captain, unless he was different from most men, would

be very angry when he discovered that a "lot of green boys" had run away with his sloop; and he, also, would leave no stone unturned to insure their speedy capture. In addition to this, there were seven boys on board who lived in the village; and, when their parents learned that they were among the runaways, it was very probable that they, too, would make every exertion to bring the cruise to an end as soon as possible. In short, as soon as their escape became known, the whole village would be aroused, and Captain Rich would be given ample opportunity to prove himself worthy of the confidence his friends had reposed in him. The deserters realized the fact that their chances for continuing their cruise for two weeks, were very slim indeed; but there were very few among them who were troubled with any gloomy forebodings. True, some of them thought of the guard-house, with extra duty at night, but the majority of them did not look so far into the future. They thought only of the fine time they expected to enjoy during their cruise, and laughed when they pictured to themselves the consternation that would prevail at the academy when their absence was first discovered. Tom, especially, was in the best of spirits. He had been the projector and manager of the most daring exploit ever attempted by the village boys, and he felt proud of it. There was one thing that was beginning to trouble him, however, and that was, he was sorry that he had used his influence to make Rich the captain of the vessel. He ought to have had that position himself. He had done most of the work, run all the risk, and he certainly ought to have been given a higher office than that of first mate But it was too late to remedy the matter, and Tom was

obliged to be satisfied with the glory he had already won.

When the sloop had cleared the harbor, and got well out into the bay, the first mate walked to the head of the companion-way and called out, "All right, now, fellows. You may come on deck;" whereupon, the boys who had been sent into the cabin, clambered up the ladder, and, unable longer to restrain their enthusiasm, gave vent to their jubilant feelings in terrific whoops and yells.

"Silence!" commanded Johnny. "Are you tired of your cruise already? Wait until you know that we are safe from pursuit before you begin your dancing and shouting."

"Why, I thought that if we once got outside the harbor, we were all right," said one of the "landlubbers."

The boys who had never been to sea were called "landlubbers," and this name clung to them during the voyage.

"That 's by no means certain," replied the third mate. "The Philistines will be after us as soon as our escape is discovered, and our only chance is to get well out to sea before daylight. If we are followed by sailing vessels, we can show a clean pair of heels; but if our pursuers come in a steamer, you academy fellows may begin to prepare yourselves for the guard-house. So you see—"

"Swallow, ahoy!" came a hail, in stentorian tones, interrupting Johnny's speech, and filling the runaways with dismay.

The astonished deserters looked toward the lighthouse, which they were at that moment passing, and whence the hail came, and saw a man standing on the

pier, waiving his hat to them, while two others were hoisting the sails of a small schooner, evidently with the intention of following them. A third had got into a skiff, and was pulling toward the village with all possible speed. In the excitement of getting safely out of the harbor, they had not thought of looking for enemies on the light-house pier, and a hasty glance at the men in the schooner showed them that the pursuit was to commence much sooner than they had expected.

"O, now, we're caught already!" drawled Tom. "It's all up with us. I knew all the while just how it would turn out."

"What shall we do, fellows?" asked Captain Rich, coming aft, rather hurriedly, to consult his officers.

"Do nothing!" replied the third mate, who did not seem to be at all concerned. "They don't know that any thing is wrong yet. No doubt it is one of the crew of the Swallow, who thinks his captain is going to sea without him."

"If that's so, then what is that man pulling back to the village for?" asked Miller. "He handles those oars as if he is in a great hurry. And, then, what are those two men doing with that schooner?"

"Why, one of them probably belongs on board here," answered Johnny. "If they hail us again, I'll answer them. Keep out of sight as much as possible, fellows."

"Swallow ahoy!" came the hail, in louder tones.

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the third mate.

"Hold on!" shouted one of the men in the schooner, which was now starting out from the pier, "I want to come on board."

This served to convince some of the runaways that

Johnny's idea of the situation was the correct one. One of the men in the schooner belonged to the Swallow, and was afraid his captain was going to sea without him.

"I can't stop!" shouted the third mate, in reply. "Wait at the village until I come back."

The runaways were astonished at this answer, and they all held their breath in suspense, wondering what would be the result. The men in the schooner evidently did not understand it, for one of them, after a moment's hesitation, called out—

"Do what?"

"I'm in a great hurry, and I can't wait for you!" repeated Johnny. "Stay at the village till I come back."

"Hold on with that sloop, I say!" shouted the man, "or it will be worse for you."

"There!" exclaimed Miller; "that shows that I was right. We're discovered, and we must run for it now. Crowd her, Harry!"

The second mate was right in his suspicions. One of the men in the schooner was the lawful captain of the Swallow. He had been visiting his brother, the keeper of the light-house, and was on the point of returning to the village, when he discovered his vessel putting out to sea. Of course he did not know who had taken her; but, being well aware of the fact that she was in the hands of some one who had no business with her, he had got the schooner under-way, and commenced the pursuit.

"Swallow ahoy!" came the hail again. "Hold on with that boat!"

The deserters made no reply, and, in fact, they scarcely heard the hail, for their attention was wholly occupied with something else. They had not imagined that they were in any danger; but now they noticed that the schooner was following in their wake at a rate of speed that would soon bring her along-side. She had the advantage of being under the control of men who understood their business. The third mate, being now fully satisfied that the Philistines were really after them, and that there was nothing left them now but to "run for it," sprang down from the sail, and, seeing that the schooner was gaining rapidly, took the wheel into his own hands. Johnny, although he was the lowest officer, was the best sailor on board, and he had not been long at the helm, before it became apparent to the Swallow's crew that their pursuers were gradually falling behind. This reassured the boys, some of whom had begun to fear that the sloop was not as swift a sailor as Johnny had led them to believe. A few of them had made up their minds that a fight for their liberties was not far distant, for not one of the deserters had any idea of allowing their cruise to be brought to an end so speedily. They had started out with the intention of enjoying a two-weeks' cruise, and they did not propose to return to the village until they got ready, or were taken back by a superior force. Some of the more determined ones had secured handspikes, which they flourished above their heads, and shook at their pursuers, to warn them that, if overtaken, it was their intention to make a desperate resistance.

"Slack up a little, Rich, and let them come alongside," said one of the crew—the same who had proposed

to knock down the sentinels at the academy, and who went by the name of the fighting member—"two men can't capture eighteen fellows."

But Captain Rich did n't believe in "slacking up;" his only desire was to leave their pursuers as far behind as possible; and, just then, there was no probability that the deserters would be called upon to use their handspikes; for, under Johnny's skillful management, the swift little sloop was running away from the schooner as rapidly as though the latter had been at anchor. The deserters were for a long time interested in the race, and some of them even expressed their regret that the schooner was not a faster boat, it would have made the chase so much more exciting. But the novelty at last wore off, and they began to hope that the rightful captain of the Swallow would soon become discouraged, and abandon the pursuit. Block Island was now near at hand; but, while the schooner was so close to them, it was, of course, out of the question to think of landing for their cargo, and they might as well surrender at once as to attempt to continue the voyage without a supply of provisions. The captain, however, seemed to have no idea of giving up the chase. He held steadily after the Swallow, thinking, no doubt, that the man who had gone to the village would soon return with assistance; and, in the meantime, he was resolved not to lose sight of his vessel.

"This won't do, fellows," exclaimed Captain Rich. "Crowd her heavy, Johnny."

"She 's doing her very best now," was the reply. "If you 'll make the breeze blow stronger, I 'll agree to make the sloop go faster."

"We 're beating them badly," continued the captain

"but that dc n't help us much, for as long as they are in sight, we can't stop for our provisions."

"Two men can't capture us," said the fighting member, who seemed to think that the only thing wanting to make their expedition a complete success, was a conflict with the schooner's crew. "If you want to land on the island, why do it! Half a dozen of us will guard the vessel, while the others bring the cargo on board."

"O, now, I 'm not going to fight!" drawled Tom. "I never had a fight in my life."

"You fellows ought to remember that we must go back to the village again, some time or another," said Miller. "I do n't go in for a fight; for we have done mischief enough already, and much more than we shall want to stand punishment for. But, perhaps, we can fool those fellows some way."

"That 's just what I was thinking of," said Johnny. "The moon is going down, and it will be as dark as pitch in fifteen minutes; then we 'll see what we can do. Just leave this business to me, and I 'll insure our escape for a sixpence."

Captain Rich had no objections to make to this arrangement, for he was quite willing that Johnny should assume the management of affairs. In fact, the third mate was the only one who seemed to know what ought to be done under the circumstances. Rich, Miller, and Tom, were officers only in name.

Thus far, the deserters had been congratulating themselves on having a bright moonlight night for their expedition; but now they were impatient for the moon to go down, and for darkness to hide them from their pursuers. In order to deceive the schooner's crew, Johnny

held on toward the island, gradually veering round as the sloop approached it, as if it was his intention to keep on out to sea; but, as soon as the darkness concealed their movements, he put the sloop about, and shaped her course toward the village. As the third mate had predicted, it was "pitch dark," the only thing visible being the light which was now hoisted at the mast-head of the schooner, by which the deserters were enabled to judge pretty nearly what their pursuers were doing. Believing that the runaways had kept on around the island, they held on their course, and, in a few moments, the Swallow met and passed the schooner, going so close to her, that the runaways could hear the two men talking to each other. The deserters held their breath in suspense as they glided by, fearful that the noise of the waves washing against the Swallow's sides would betray them. But their pursuers did not hear it, for they kept on around the island, and, when the light at the schooner's mast-head disappeared in the darkness, every boy on board drew a long breath of relief. Their pursuers had been completely deceived as to their intended movements, and the coast was clear, so that they could land for their provisions.

"Hurrah for Harding!" exclaimed one of the crew. "If he had n't been here, we should have been in a nice fix."

This opened the eyes of Captain Rich, who began to be suspicious that the deserters had more confidence in the third mate than they had in himself—a state of affairs that troubled him exceedingly. He saw that he had made a mistake in permitting Johnny to manage the vessel during the pursuit, and he resolved that there-

after he would, under all circumstances, assert his authority as commander of the vessel.

"Now, Harding," said he, "take us to the place where you stowed our provisions."

In obedience to the order, the third mate turned the sloop's bow in the direction he imagined the island to be, and Tom stationed one of the crew on the forecastle, to act as lookout. The Swallow moved silently through the water, every boy on board straining his eyes to catch the first glimpse of the island; and presently the lookout exclaimed:

"Land ho!"

"Where away?" asked Captain Rich.

"Dead ahead," was the answer.

Upon hearing this, Johnny called a boy to take his place at the wheel; and after stationing Tom, with two others, in the mast, to attend to any orders he might find it necessary to give, he took his stand on the forecastle, to watch for the landing place. The island could be dimly seen looming up through the darkness, and, shortly afterward, the Swallow passed a long, high point, that stretched out into the bay. Then Johnny knew where they were. The farmer's house was just behind that point.

"Helm hard a port!" said the third mate. "Stand by to let go that main sheet. Let go all!"

These orders being obeyed, the sloop rounded the point, and, in five minutes more, was made fast at the farmer's wharf. Johnny then conducted the crew toward the barn, where their provisions were stowed; and, on the way there, he stopped at the house to arouse the farmer, who, after a delay that seemed an age to the

impatient runaways, appeared at the door, with a lantern in his hand. He seemed surprised to see so many boys in the party, but, still believing that they were about to start off on a hunting and fishing excursion, he assisted them in getting their provisions on board the sloop, and amused the deserters by expressing the wish that they might enjoy themselves, and have the best of luck.

"Thank you, sir," said Captain Rich; "we hope so, too. All aboard, fellows."

The deserters sprang over the rail, the line was cast off, the third mate took his stand at the wheel, and the Swallow again began her voyage. As she rounded the point, the runaways strained their eyes in every direction, and were delighted to discover that the schooner was not in sight. But their joy was of short duration, for Tom pointed out something in the direction of the village, that instantly destroyed all their hopes of a long and pleasant cruise, and caused Johnny Harding to say, "Now, fellows, the chase begins in earnest." Away off in the direction of the light-house pier, they saw a red light dancing over the little waves, and heard the loud puffing of a steamer. The man who had gone to the village had procured assistance in the shape of one of Mr. Newcombe's fast tugs.

"What shall we do now, Johnny?" asked the deserters, crowding around the third mate. "Do you suppose she is after us?"

"Of course she is!" said one of the "landlubbers." "We might as well surrender. We can't beat that tug; and, besides, I don't much like the idea of going to sea in this little boat. I am far enough from shore already."

"Nonsense" exclaimed Johnny. "We won't talk of surrender yet, for there may be a chance for escape. As for this 'little boat,' she is perfectly safe; I would n't be afraid to cross the Atlantic in her. Now, keep still, and let us see what those fellows intend to do."

As the lights on the tug showed that she was going toward the upper end of the island, Johnny, without waiting to consult Captain Rich, brought the sloop about, and shaped her course toward the village again, in hopes they might pass her as they had passed the schooner. For ten minutes the excitement on board the sloop was intense. The tug, going at a rate of speed that would have rendered escape impossible had the deserters been discovered, kept on toward the head of the island; and, although the runaways sometimes thought she was coming directly toward them, finally passed the sloop, which was now moving slowly down the island, as close to the beach as the third mate dared to go. Their pursuers had been evaded, and the runaways were free to continue their cruise.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CRUISE OF THE SWALLOW.

"NOW, fellows, what shall we do?" asked Captain Rich, as soon as the lights on the tug had disappeared around the head of the island. "It is my intention," he added, by way of apology, fearful that some of his crew might think he did not know what course he ought to pursue, "to consult my officers every time we are in trouble. I think a captain always ought to do that. So, let 's hear from you."

"I propose that we hold over toward the mainland," said Johnny. "We're safe from pursuit now until morning; but we want to keep as far away from that tug as possible."

As Captain Rich raised no objections to this proposition, the third mate brought the sloop about, and headed her away from the island. The breeze was freshening, and, when the swallow felt its full force, she began to fly over the waves like a duck. The runaways were delighted with the exhibition of speed she made, and some of the reckless ones wished that the schooner would again come in sight, so that they might show her how badly they could beat her.

While Tom had been carrying out his plans, and ar-

ranging matters for the cruise, it had never occurred to him to decide where they would go, should their attempt at escape prove successful. In fact, none of the deserters had ever broached this subject, believing, no doubt, that it was of secondary importance, and could be easily settled at any time. But now this question was brought up by the third mate, who, after calling a boy to take his place at the wheel, asked the captain to give out the course.

"That's something I can't do," replied Rich, "until you tell me where you want to go."

"Let's visit New Bedford," said one of the "landlubbers," as the deserters crowded around their officers; "it's not far out of our way, and some of us want to go there to look at the whale ships."

"No, no!" shouted several of the boys.

"I object to visiting any city or town," said Johnny, "for there's danger in it. It isn't often that a crowd of fellows are seen cruising about in a vessel like this, and some one might ask unpleasant questions."

As the debate progressed, and votes were taken on the places proposed, it became evident that none of the boys had neglected to give some thought to this important question. One suggested that it would be a good opportunity to visit the fishing banks off Newfoundland; another thought it would be a cheap way of getting to New York; while a third, who had never seen a sheet of water larger than Newport Bay, was in favor of camping on some island close to the village. Each boy brought forward a host of arguments to convince the rest of the deserters that his plan for their amusement was the best; but it was finally discovered that those

who wanted to visit Nantucket were in the majority; and, after a strong opposition from some of the timid "landlubbers," who did not want to trust themselves very far from shore in so small a vessel, this point was settled.

"Now, captain, what's the course?" asked Johnny, again.

"We don't need any course yet," replied Rich. "As long as the land is in plain view, we'll use that for our compass. We will follow the shores of Newport Bay until we get into Buzzard's Bay, and then we'll steer exactly south."

"But, perhaps, that won't take us where we want to go!" said the third mate.

"I'd like to know what's the reason!" exclaimed Captain Rich. "Haven't you learned enough about geography to know that Nantucket is south of Massachusetts? Now, Newcombe, set the watch."

So saying, the captain turned on his heel and walked down into the cabin, leaving his third mate standing silent and thoughtful.

"I expected this," said he, unconsciously giving utterance to the thoughts that passed through his mind.

"Expected what?" asked one of the crew, who happened to overhear the remark.

"O, nothing!" replied Johnny, quickly.

"Now, see here, Harding," said the boy, whose confidence in the captain had been considerably shaken by the latter's conduct during the pursuit, "if you don't believe that Rich is all right, you ought to say so before we get much farther from shore."

"Who said he wasn't all right?" asked Johnny.

"He has made three or four voyages across the Atlantic, and he ought to know what he is about."

But Captain Rich did not "know what he was about," and the third mate was very well aware of the fact. Rich had been sent to sea because he could not be controlled at home, and, during his voyages, he had conducted himself exactly as Tom had behaved on his cruise on the Savannah. Being a lazy, good-for-nothing boy, he had allowed his opportunities to slip by him unimproved; and, when he was appointed captain of the Swallow, he knew but very little more about seamanship and navigation than he did when he first began his career as a sailor. Johnny knew this, and he was confident that, before long, there would be trouble on board the Swallow. Even the "landlubbers" would soon discover that Rich could not be depended upon, and then there would be a change of commanders. He, however, had "stood up" for the captain because he did not wish to be the first one to find fault.

In the meantime, Tom had gone below to execute the order Captain Rich had given him. He found pens and paper in the captain's desk; and, after writing down the names of all the boys on board, he divided them into two watches, being careful to have in each watch an equal number of boys who had "been to sea." His own name, with that of Johnny Harding, Tom put down with the port watch, and those of Rich and Miller with the starboard watch. Then, after showing the "watch bill" to the captain, who expressed himself satisfied with what had been done, he went on deck to read it to the crew. He lighted the lamp in the binnacle, and, calling the boys around him, read their

names, after which he ordered the starboard watch to remain on deck, and the port to "go below and turn in until six o'clock in the morning." Captain Rich came on deck a few moments afterward, a boy belonging to the starboard watch was sent to the wheel, and Tom and Johnny went below. They found the cabin crowded with boys in their watch. Every one of the bunks was filled with as many of the deserters as could get into it, and the others were stretched out on the floor of the cabin, with their uniform coats under their heads to serve as pillows. Tom was not very well pleased with this state of affairs, for he thought that, being the second in authority on board the vessel, he ought to be allowed a bunk to himself.

"O, now, see here, fellows," whined the first mate, "where am I to sleep?"

"Look around and hunt up a place," replied a voice from one of the bunks. "There's plenty of room."

"O, I can't see any!" replied Tom. "I am the first mate of this vessel, and I want one of those bunks."

"Rather a rough chance there, Newcombe," said one of the boys on the floor.

Tom began to think so too. The discipline of the ship had not yet been established, and none of the crew seemed disposed to treat the first mate with the respect his high position demanded, for not one of them made him the offer of a bunk.

His only chance was to find a sleeping place on the floor, for he knew that an attempt, on his part, to compel any of the crew to give up one of the beds would be met with stubborn resistance. While Tom, after divesting himself of his coat, was trying to find a place

to lie down, the third mate was causing a good deal of grumbling among the boys on the floor, by moving about and searching every nook and corner of the cabin. He was not satisfied with the course the captain had given out, and he wanted to find a chart of the coast. He knew that the island of Nantucket was "exactly south" of some parts of Massachusetts, but he did not believe that it lay in that direction from Buzzard's Bay. He was as well posted in geography as any boy on board. He knew a great deal more about it than captain Rich, but he had never claimed to be a navigator. He was seaman enough to handle the sloop in all kinds of weather, but he could not take her where the crew might decide to go, and, more than that, he did not believe that the skipper was any better off in this respect than he was. By following the captain's course, he believed that they would leave Nantucket away to the eastward, and it was to satisfy himself on this point that he wanted a chart. But, if there was one on board, he could not find it; and, finally becoming weary of the search, the third mate lay down among his companions, and slept as soundly as he would have done had he entertained no fears of the captain's ability to take the sloop to her destination. The runaways all slept soundly until six o'clock, when they were aroused by the second mate. Some of them yielded prompt obedience to the call, while others refused to move until Miller descended the ladder and shook them roughly by the shoulder. Tom and Johnny were the first ones on deck. They found that the Swallow had left Newport far behind them, and was bounding along through Buzzard's Bay before a fine breeze. The headlands at the entrance of

the harbor were in plain view, and beyond them, was the ocean—its water flashing and sparkling in the sunlight like diamonds.

"What's the course, captain?" asked Tom, who was now to take charge of the deck.

"I don't know," replied Rich. "I haven't looked at the compass for two hours. I don't need a course as long as the land is in sight. I know that we are in Buzzard's Bay, and that if this breeze holds out, we will be in deep water in an hour. When you pass that cape," he continued, pointing to the nearest headland, "hold her exactly south."

"All the starboard watch below!" shouted Miller.

The boys belonging to this watch made a rush for the cabin, and the second mate was on the point of following them, when Tom inquired:

"How about breakfast, Miller? I'm hungry."

"Well, then, go into the hold and help yourself," was the answer. "That's the way we did. We couldn't find any one in our watch willing to act as cook, so we made our breakfast on crackers, codfish, and cheese; and, fellows," continued the second mate, "do you know that we forgot to take on a supply of water?"

"Is there none on board?" asked Johnny.

"Only about half a barrel, and that won't last eighteen thirsty fellows long. The captain says we'll take on a supply when we reach Nantucket."

"Have you seen any thing more of the Philistines?" inquired Tom.

"No. They probably think we are concealed among the islands in Newport Bay; and, as soon as they discover their mistake, they'll be after us again."

Miller then went down into the cabin, and Tom followed the third mate to the hold. One of the barrels of crackers had been broken open, and, judging by the quantity that was gone out of it, the boys in the starboard watch must have been very hungry. Johnny had not calculated on such ravenous appetites when he made his estimate of the provisions that would be required for the voyage, and it was evident to him that the supply would soon be exhausted.

The port watch grumbled a good deal over their breakfast, for they were not accustomed to such plain fare. The codfish made them thirsty, and the water was hardly fit to drink. But, nevertheless, they made a hearty meal, and returned to the deck in the best of spirits, unanimously voting the expedition a decided success, and declaring that it was much pleasanter than remaining at the academy under arrest, even though they had nothing but codfish and crackers to eat.

It was no wonder that the boys felt cheerful. It was a beautiful morning; there was breeze enough stirring to send the Swallow along at a lively pace, the motion was exhilarating, and even the "landlubbers" forgot their fears, and really enjoyed the sail. Tom, especially, was in his element. He walked up and down the deck, with his hands in his pockets, now and then looking up at the sails, to see that the boy at the wheel kept them full; and, more to show his authority than any thing else, he finally set two of the watch at work cleaning lamps, others he sent into the hold to sweep up the crumbs that had been scattered about, and the rest he ordered to wash down the deck. Some of the boys grumbled at this· but the majority, including Johnny

Harding, lent prompt and willing obedience to all his commands; and, in a short time, the sloop's deck presented a scene of neatness and order that would have surprised her lawful captain, could he have seen her at that moment. Of course, such a state of affairs had its effect upon Tom. Every thing was going on smoothly, and gradually his old idea, of one day becoming a trader, took possession of his mind, and, just then, the first mate thought it was the "very business he had always wanted to go into." He never had cared a cent about becoming a farmer, or a general in the regular army, for he had always known that he was "cut out" for a trader; and he resolved that, as soon as the cruise was ended, and he could get out of the military academy, he would go to work at something, and earn money enough to buy a sloop like the Swallow.

After the crew had performed the work assigned them, they assembled on deck; and now, for the first time, some of them began to believe that the voyage, if it should be a long one, would prove to be rather tiresome. They were too far from shore to see what was going on there, and, although some of them were, for a time, interested in the novelty of their situation, they soon grew tired of having nothing to do, and, stretching themselves out on deck, they prepared to make up for the sleep they had lost the night before, leaving their two officers and the boy at the wheel to take care of the vessel. During Tom's watch, nothing occurred to relieve the monotony of the voyage. About ten o'clock, the Swallow passed the headlands at the entrance of Buzzard's Bay, and the first mate, in obedience to the captain's command, ordered the boy at the wheel to "hold her exactly south."

At noon, the port watch made another meal on codfish and crackers, after which the captain and second mate were called up to take charge of the deck. At one o'clock, they passed the Elizabeth Islands, and then Johnny, who had remained on deck, thought it high time to speak.

"Captain," said he, "how long do you intend to hold this course?"

"Until we reach Nantucket!" answered Rich, in a tone of voice which implied that he thought his third mate very inquisitive.

"Well, if that is the case," continued Johnny, "you had better put the crew on half-rations. The voyage will be a long one, and our provisions won't hold out."

"I'd like to know what's the reason!" exclaimed Captain Rich, angrily. "Now, Harding, if you know so much about navigation, perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me where we will bring up."

"According to my way of thinking," replied Johnny, his good nature not in the least ruffled by the other's sneering tones, "if you hold this course long enough, you will find yourself somewhere in the West Indies; and, after you lose sight of that shore there," pointing to one of the islands they had just passed, "you won't see land again until you get there, either."

'That's just all you know about it. But you need n't talk to me, for, as long as I am master of this vessel, I intend to do as I please."

"All right," replied the third mate, as he turned to go below; "if the others can stand it, I know I can."

This conversation had been carried on in a low tone, and none of the crew had overheard it. No doubt this

was fortunate for Rich, for, had any of the deserters been aware that they were sailing as straight out to sea as they could go, the captain might have discovered that he could not "do as he pleased," even though he was the commander of the vessel. During the whole of that afternoon, Rich kept a sharp lookout for the shores of Nantucket, but the only land to be seen was the island they had passed soon after dinner, and which was gradually sinking below the horizon, as the sloop left it farther and farther behind. When the port watch was called that night, the island was shut out from their view by a dense fog, and a hasty glance at the binnacle showed the third mate that the captain had not changed his course.

"Now, see here, fellows!" exclaimed one of the watch, "where's the land?"

"There's the captain," answered Johnny. "Ask him."

"Land isn't far off," said Rich, who had overheard the question. "We'll reach it long before daylight."

If the captain expected that this assurance would silence the fears of his crew, if they had any, he was mistaken; for, no sooner had he disappeared below, than the port watch gathered in a group on the forecastle, where they held a consultation. Johnny saw what was going on, but he kept aloof from them, determined to carry out the resolution he had made at the beginning of the voyage, that he would not be the first one to complain. Tom, as usual, paced the deck in deep mental abstraction, and he did not notice what was taking place on the forecastle. Contrary to the third mate's expectations, however, no demonstration was made, for,

after a few moment's whispering among themselves, the watch, with the exception of two lookouts, stretched themselves on deck. Johnny, and the rest of the watch, turned in at midnight, and, when they came on deck again in the morning, there was no land in sight—nothing but the clear blue sky above them, and the ocean beneath. The third mate looked at the captain as if to say, "What do you think of it now?" But Rich, although he well knew what was passing in Johnny's mind, walked down into the cabin without making any reply. He could not help seeing that he had made a mistake in his calculations, but he was determined that he would not acknowledge it, for that would be equivalent to confessing that he did not understand his business. After kicking off his boots, and divesting himself of his coat, Captain Rich lay down on the floor, for, as usual, the bunks were all occupied by the "foremast hands," and, in a few moments, was fast asleep. He slept soundly for two hours, in spite of an animated discussion that was carried on over his head, and then he was awakened by one of the port watch, who informed him that he was wanted on deck.

"Is it twelve o'clock already?" he drowsily asked.

"No, but we want to see you on deck at once!"

Rich easily divined, by the boy's excited manner, that something unusual was going on. Rising from the floor, he picked up his coat and boots, and slowly ascended to the deck.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CHANGE OF COMMANDERS.

WHEN Captain Rich and the starboard watch had gone below, the third mate went aloft and seated himself on the cross-trees, to watch for the shores of Nantucket. For two hours he remained on his perch, straining his eyes in every direction, but without discovering the wished-for land; and finally, becoming weary of his watch, and being fully satisfied that Captain Rich would never reach his destination as long as he held that course, he descended to the deck and joined Tom, who was walking about, with his hands in his pockets. At this moment, he became aware that some exciting question was being discussed by the boys in the forecastle, and presently the watch came aft in a body, with Harry Green at their head.

"See here, fellows," said Harry; "if you can tell us where we are going, we'd like to have you do it?"

"Why, we're bound for Nantucket," said Tom.

"Well, when will we get there?" asked Harry. "The amount of it is, fellows, we believe that Rich doesn't understand his business. He has made a great mistake. If our calculations are correct, Nantucket is a long way behind us. What do you think about it, Johnny?"

The third mate had never hinted his suspicions to any of the crew, for he thought that if their skipper was really out of his reckoning, some of the "old sailors" would not be long in finding it out. Besides, he was well enough acquainted with Rich to know that he would be angry when he learned that his crew doubted his ability as a navigator; and that, being commander of the vessel, he would insist that he had a right to do as he pleased. This, Johnny knew, would bring on a mutiny, Captain Rich would be relieved of the command, and thus the object of the cruise would be defeated. Rich had his friends, who would sympathize with him, and, as long as one half of the crew cherished unkind feelings toward the other half, no one on board could enjoy himself. The third mate had thought the matter over, and it had been his desire to keep out of trouble as long as possible.

"Come, now, Harding," said Harry; "let's hear what you have to say about this matter. Is n't there something wrong?"

"I think there is," replied Johnny. "As near as I can judge, we are at least two hundred miles from land."

"Two hundred miles!" repeated one of the crew, turning as pale as a sheet; "and in this small vessel. Let's turn round and go back, fellows!"

"And more than that," continued the third mate, "we are bound, not for Nantucket, but for Hayti, or some other outlandish port."

"You do n't say so!" exclaimed several of the crew, in alarm.

"O, now, we do n't want to go to Hayti," drawled

Tom, though, to save his life, he could not have told in what part of the world that island was situated.

"Of course I am not positive of it," said Johnny; "but I am certain of one thing, and that is, we are leaving Nantucket behind as fast as we can."

"Now, fellows," said Harry, turning to the watch, who were intensely excited, "that shows that I was right when I said Rich didn't know what he was about."

Every one of the crew had great confidence in Johnny; and there were some among them who believed that, had the officers been selected according to their merits, the third mate would have held the position of captain, while Rich would have been nothing more than a foremast hand. The "landlubbers," especially, looked upon Johnny as one of the best sailors in existence, for he had managed the sloop during the pursuit; and when they found that he, too, believed that their ignorant skipper was taking them straight out to sea, they were greatly frightened. No doubt, like the mariners of old, they imagined that a multitude of dangers brooded over the great waters, and that all who ventured out of sight of land were doomed to destruction. But the uneasiness was not confined to these alone, for even the "old sailors" were very far from being pleased with their situation. The simple fact of being out of sight of land, however, had no terrors for them. So long as there was a clear sky above them, a smooth sea beneath, plenty of water and provisions on board, and the captain could tell exactly where they were, it made little difference to them how far they were from land. They had joined the expedition on purpose to enjoy themselves, and they could do that at sea as well as on shore. But, under the ex-

isting circumstances, having no confidence in their captain, they did not feel altogether safe.

"Well," said Harry Green, at length, "we ought to call up the other fellows, and talk this matter over with them. I am in favor of relieving Rich, and giving the command to some one who understands his business."

"That 's my idea exactly," exclaimed Tom. "I never did believe that Rich was the man for that place. Now, tell me where you want to go, and I 'll take care of you."

"You!" exclaimed several of the boys; "who asked you to take care of us?"

"Why, if Rich is relieved, the command falls on the next highest officer, do n't it?" demanded Tom.

"Not always," said Harry. "You will do very well for a mate, Newcombe; but I, for one, do n't think we should gain any thing by making you captain. It 's my opinion that Johnny will get that position."

"O, now, I won't stand that!" drawled Tom, who had suddenly made up his mind that he was just the one to take command of the sloop. "I like Johnny well enough, but it is n't right that he should be put over me. I ought to be master of this ship."

"I do n't want the position," said Johnny. "I came here to have some fun; and as long as I can enjoy myself, and know that I am safe, it makes no difference to me whether I am a foremast hand or an officer."

"Then you pass the command to me, don't you, Harding?" asked Tom, eagerly.

"No he don't!" shouted several of the boys. "We have something to say about that!"

"We do n't want to raise any fuss now," said Harry;

"but the majority always rules, and Newcombe would give in if he was n't such a bull-headed rascal."

"O, now, look here!" whined the first mate. I want you to stop calling me a bull-headed rascal. I won't give in an inch. I ought to be captain of this vessel. I have friends in the starboard watch who will stand by me."

"Let 's call the other watch up, and hear what they have to say about it," said Johnny.

"I am in for that," said another, who was one of Rich's friends. "I call it a mean trick to run a man down behind his back. You ought to give him a chance to defend himself."

Some of the boys, accordingly, went into the cabin to arouse their slumbering companions, and presently the watch came on deck, rubbing their eyes and yawning, and acting altogether as if they were very sleepy.

"What 's the matter?" asked captain Rich, appearing at the head of the companion way with his boots in his hand. "Any thing wrong?"

Harry Green, who acted as spokesman for the malcontents, stated the cause of the trouble, and ended by informing Rich that it was the opinion of the majority of the boys in the port watch that the safety of the sloop, and all on board, demanded that there should be a change of commanders. The boys in the starboard watch were greatly excited and alarmed by the intelligence that they had already passed Nantucket, and were steering toward the West Indies; and some of them declared that Rich ought to have known better than to accept so responsible a situation, when he knew that he was not able to fill it. This was instantly resisted by Rich's

friends, who affirmed, that if their favorite could not be trusted, there was not a boy on board who could be depended upon.

"It 's easy enough to find fault, fellows," said Rich; "but if you know so much more than I do, why don't you take this business off my hands?"

"That 's just what we are going to do," replied Harry, bluntly. "We intend to appoint another captain. Boys, I propose that Johnny Harding be—"

"Hold on," interrupted Johnny. "I move that Rich be allowed to retain his office, on condition that he puts the Swallow about, and takes us back to Nantucket."

"We're going there now," said the captain, decidedly. "And I won't put the sloop about. As long as I am master of the Swallow, I shall do as I please; and, whenever you get tired of me, you can appoint another captain very easily. But I tell you beforehand, that you won't make any thing by it. You ought to try and keep on good terms with every one on board."

While this conversation was going on, Miller and two or three of his friends had been busy with the crew, urging them to make Tom captain; and, when Rich ceased speaking, one of them proposed the name of the first mate, which was received with such long cries of—"Hurrah for Newcombe! he 's the man!" that it made Johnny's friends look rather blank. But when Harry Green requested all the boys who voted for Tom to walk over to the port side of the sloop, it was found that there were but six of them.

"Now," exclaimed Harry, "all who are in favor of Johnny Harding being captain of this vessel, step over to the starboard side."

Nine boys obeyed the order, and Tom was beaten.

"O, now, I won't stand it!" drawled Tom, who was so vexed and disappointed that it was all he could do to choke back his tears. "I am the highest officer in our society, and the first mate of this vessel, and you ought to make me captain. If you don't give me that position, I'll refuse to do duty."

"It's too late now!" replied one of the boys. "Harding is elected."

"Then you may appoint another first mate," said Tom, who was determined to "rule or ruin;" "and you needn't ask me to perform any work, for I won't do it."

"You might as well appoint a second mate also, while you are about it," said Miller, who thought it best to follow Tom's example. "Rich and Newcombe are my friends, and I don't care about serving under any one else. If you can't trust them, you can't trust any boy on board."

"Do as you please, fellows," said Harry. "We don't want you to have any hard feelings about what we have done; but, if you don't want any thing more to do with us, we can get along without you."

"Can you?" exclaimed Tom, suddenly. "We'll see whether you can or not. I've got an idea, and I'll show you—"

Here Tom was interrupted by a significant look from Miller. He was about to say, "I'll show you a trick you never thought of," but he understood the look Miller gave him, and he left the sentence unfinished.

"What will you show us, Newcombe?" asked one of the crew.

"O, nothing," was the answer. "I did n't mean any thing."

But a good many of the boys doubted this. Some of them were well enough acquainted with Tom to be well aware that the simple fact of his having an "idea," was a sufficient reason why they should keep a close watch on all his movements; and this they resolved to do.

"Look out for Newcombe, now," whispered Harry Green. "He 's got an idea, and, when he gets that way, he 's dangerous."

"Fellows," said the new captain, "I do n't like this business. We came out on this cruise to enjoy ourselves, and what has just happened has caused unkind feelings, and will spoil all our sport."

To the astonishment of all, Rich, who had been seated on the combings of a hatch, whistling to himself, as if he had no interest in what was going on, suddenly sprang to his feet, exclaiming:

"I take back what I said a few moments ago. I am willing that the majority should rule, and, if you want Harding for captain, I have no fault to find. I 'll take my place as a foremast hand; and you, Newcombe and Miller, I want you to do your work just as you did while I was captain."

The boys listened to this speech in utter amazement. It was not Rich's disposition to forget a real or an imagined injury, and they could not understand it. They were, however, very much relieved to learn that he was willing to do his duty in any capacity, and there was such apparent sincerity in what he said, that they could not but believe that he was in earnest.

"Well," drawled Tom, after thinking the matter over, "I'll obey orders."

"So will I," said Miller.

"That's sensible," said Harry. "Now we will get along smoothly, as we did before."

The new captain, believing that every one on board was satisfied with the change, now took charge of the vessel; and, after a short consultation with some of his friends, he surprised Rich by offering him the position of third mate. He did this, not because he believed the late captain to be more worthy of it than any other boy on board, but because he wanted to show him that he appreciated the manner in which Rich had accepted the verdict of his companions.

"I'll take it," said the latter, "on the condition that if, at any time, you get tired of me, you will tell me so. I want some fun before I go back to the academy to be put into the guard-house, and I don't care who is captain."

This made Johnny hope that, if Rich had ever cherished any ill-will toward any of the crew, he had forgotten it.

But the truth of the matter was, the old captain and his friends were not as well satisfied as they pretended to be. Rich's pride had been sorely wounded, and he could not bear the thought of taking a subordinate position after once serving as captain. He believed that he was as competent to fill the position as any boy on board, and he determined to make an effort to regain it. Tom was angry because he could not forget that the votes of a majority of the crew had defeated his aspirations for the captaincy; and he hoped that he might find an opportunity to revenge himself on

them. Miller, and a few of the foremast hands, were displeased because the claims of their favorites had been disregarded, and they, too, set themselves at work to study up some plan to "get even" with those who had voted to relieve Rich of the command, and make Johnny captain. But the discontented ones were all "deep." They knew that if they refused to do duty, they would be so closely watched that they could have no opportunity of talking the matter over among themselves; so they concluded that it was best to appear to give way to the majority. This would allay suspicion, and Johnny's friends, believing that they were satisfied with the change, would take no notice of their movements. This was the way Rich and his friends looked at the matter, and subsequent events proved that they had not been mistaken.

As soon as Captain Harding took command of the Swallow, he put her about, and give out a course which, he imagined, would take them much nearer to Nantucket than the one Rich had given. Every thing appeared to be going on smoothly, the boys all seemed to be enjoying themselves; and when any of them laughed at the idea of finding Nantucket by sailing exactly south from Buzzard's Bay, Rich always made some good-natured reply, that was very far from being an index of his feelings. The port watch went on at six o'clock in the evening, (the routine on the Swallow was six hours on duty and six hours off,) and when all the starboard watch had gone below, Rich and Tom met in the waist to talk over their plans.

"This is a good joke on me, is n't it?" asked Rich. "They gave me the captaincy without my asking them

for it, and now they kick me out, giving the office to Harding, who knows no more about navigation than I do, and making me third mate. I wonder if they suppose that I am going to stand any such work as that? Not if I know it."

"I 've got an idea!" said Tom.

"Out with, it then! I 'm listening with all my ears."

"It is this," continued the first mate: "I propose that when we get into port, we think up some plan to get Harding and all his friends to leave the boat, and then we 'll take her and go to sea on our own hook."

"Newcombe, you 're a brick!" exclaimed Rich. "That's a capital idea. I told them they would n't make any thing by putting Harding in my place, and I think they will find that I told the truth. I hope that we shall reach port soon, for I am anxious to pay these fellows off in their own coin. But, Newcombe, I 'll make a prediction. In less than two days you 'll see trouble on this vessel. I was right, and Johnny is wrong. He is holding her straight out to sea. Before long the provision and water will all be gone, and then we 'll be in a nice fix. They 'll see then who knows the most about navigation."

The two conspirators spent an hour in discussing the details of their plan; but there was one point they could not decide, and that was, how to manage to induce Johnny and his friends to leave the vessel, in case they succeeded in reaching some port. However, they finally concluded that, in this, they would be governed by circumstances—Tom assuring Rich that when the time for action arrived, he could "make things work all right." They then separated to explain their plan of operations to their friends.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

NOTWITHSTANDING his prediction that Captain Harding never would succeed in taking the vessel safely into port, Rich thought it best to prepare for action; and he lost no time in revealing to his friends the plan that had just been determined upon. There were six boys on board, including Tom, who agreed to "stand by" him, and among them was the "fighting member," who urged Rich to take the sloop that very night. If Johnny refused to give up possession, it would, he thought, be a good opportunity to reënact the scenes in the story of the mutiny at sea, which seemed to occupy all his thoughts. But Rich knew that Johnny's friends were numerous, and spunky, and that if an attempt was made to take the vessel by force, the mutineers would, in all probability, get the worst of it. By following out the first mate's idea, they could accomplish their object without danger to themselves, and so this plan was finally adopted. The malcontents were all delighted to receive their leader's assurance that he intended to "get even" with the new captain; but they were very careful to do all their talking and planning when none of Johnny's friends were in hearing, so that no one except those

whom Rich and Tom had taken into their confidence knew what was going on.

On the second morning after Harding took command of the sloop, Rich found that his prediction would not be verified. Land was in plain view at sunrise; and, at noon, the Swallow, after coasting along the shore to find a suitable harbor, entered a little bay, and was made fast at a wharf, in front of a farm-house. Johnny's friends all insisted that the new captain had brought them safely to their destination, while Rich and his followers affirmed that if that was Nantucket they would agree to "eat the sloop," and perform several other impossible feats.

"What island is this?" asked Johnny, of a man who appeared at the door of the house, while the sloop was being made fast.

"Martha's Vineyard," was the reply.

"How far are we from Edgartown?"

"About fifteen miles by the coast, and six miles by land. But I say, boys," continued the man, coming down to the wharf, "what boat is that?"

"The Dreadnought, from New Bedford," answered Rich, with a wink at his companions.

"What are you doing so far from home?"

"O, just taking a sail, for the fun of the thing."

The man, looking at the deserters with a comical expression on his face, continued:

"Perhaps that's the truth, and then, perhaps, it is n't. That sloop is the Swallow, and there was a tug here this morning after you. O, you can't fool me," he added, with a laugh, noticing that some of the boys opened their eyes, as if very much astonished. "I know all about it."

"Jump ashore and cast off that line," said Captain Harding, turning to one of his crew. "We had better get away from here."

"O, you need n't be afraid of me," said the man. "I'm not going to trouble you. Besides, I would advise you to remain here until evening, for if you go to Edgartown now, you 'll certainly be captured."

Some of the deserters were rather suspicious of the farmer, while others thought he looked like an "honest old chap," and that he had no idea of attempting to detain them. However, they had nothing to fear from him, even if he proved himself to be an enemy; so, after a short consultation, they decided to remain at his wharf, at least long enough to take on board a supply of fresh water. Rich and his friends were strongly in favor of this, for they were impatient for an opportunity to put their plans into execution. After the deserters had got ashore, and talked a few moments longer with the farmer, they discovered that he was disposed to be friendly toward them, for he told them all about the intended movements of their pursuers, as far as he had been able to learn them. He said that there were no less than three steamers after them, and that the one which had left his wharf at daylight that morning, was loaded with students, who had authority from the principal of the academy to arrest the deserters wherever they found them. Some of the young soldiers had expressed the hope that they would n't catch the runaways for two weeks, as they were having a jolly cruise on the tug, and wished to continue it as long as possible. The rightful captain of the Swallow was also on the tug, and, unlike the students, he was impatient to

capture the deserters as soon as possible. He was astonished at the recklessness displayed by a "lot of green boys," in putting to sea in a boat, without "knowing the first thing about seamanship or navigation," and predicted that nothing more would ever be seen of the sloop or of her crew. The farmer then went on to say that the last exploit of the Night-hawks had caused great excitement among the citizens of Newport. The manner in which they had effected their escape from the academy astonished every one, and was the general topic of conversation. Mr. Newcombe, not being satisfied with what he had already done, was to send out two more tugs that morning; and, in all probability, the deserters would soon find the islands about Buzzard's Bay very unsafe. After telling them this much, the farmer thought it a good opportunity to give the boys some advice. He assured the deserters that what they had done would win them no honor, and urged them to return to Newport immediately, and endeavor to make some amends for their misconduct by renewed attention to their duties.

"O, that's played out!" exclaimed one of the boys. "If you had ever attended the military academy, you would n't talk that way. We're on the black list now, and we might as well enjoy ourselves while we can."

This seemed to be the opinion of all the boys; and the farmer, seeing that they were determined to have their own way, made no further attempts to induce them to return to the village.

The first mate, becoming impatient at this delay, now urged Captain Harding to set the crew at work.

The farmer showed them a spring, behind the house, and, armed with buckets, pans, and cups, the deserters began the work of filling the water-barrels. It was a tedious task, and while it was going on, Tom had ample time to mature his plans. He soon decided upon his course, which was communicated to Rich; and, although they were by no means certain that it would prove successful, it was the best they could think of, and, after some discussion, was adopted.

Tom soon becoming tired of carrying water, set his bucket down, and amused himself in walking about the farm. At the end of half an hour, after the casks had been filled, and the crew had returned on board the vessel—while Johnny's friends were lounging about the deck, resting after their work, and Rich's followers were busy in the hold, setting things in order—the third mate went aloft and took his stand on the cross-trees, to watch for the Philistines, he said, but, in reality, to signal to Tom that the time for action had arrived. In a few moments, the latter made his appearance, carrying in each hand a huge slice of water-melon, which he was devouring with great avidity. As he had expected, this instantly attracted the attention of the boys, several of whom eagerly inquired:

"Where did you get that, Newcombe?"

"Bought it of that farmer," was the reply. "He's got plenty more, and sells them cheap, too. You can get one as big as a bushel basket for five cents."

"Give us a piece, Tom," shouted one of the boys from the hold.

"O, no; I can't," drawled the first mate. "Go and get some for yourself."

"Come back with us, and show us where you got it," said another.

"O, you can find the place without me. It's just on the other side of that corn-field. The farmer is there now. I told him that I would send you down."

The deserters who were lounging about the deck waited to hear no more, but, springing ashore, started at the top of their speed for the farmer's melon-patch. Rich descended to the deck with all possible speed, the boys clambered up out of the hold, and some of them even jumped upon the wharf and followed the others a short distance; but as soon as the main body of the crew had disappeared behind the house, they hastily returned to the vessel, where Tom and two of his friends were already engaged in hoisting the sails. Rich cast off the line with which the Swallow was made fast, and just as he sprang on board, the sloop moved slowly away from the wharf. Tom's plan had worked to perfection. Johnny Harding and every one of his friends were on shore, and the seven mutineers had the vessel to themselves.

Rich took the wheel, and, as soon as the sloop had gained steerage-way, he put her about and stood out of the harbor. Of course, it required considerable time to execute all these movements, and scarcely was the Swallow fairly under way, when Johnny and several of his friends appeared, loaded with water-melons. A single glance at the vessel, standing out of the bay, under a full press of canvass, was all that was needed to convince them that they were in a very unpleasant situation. They knew that Rich, Tom, and their friends were about to desert them, and they had no difficulty

in divining their motives for so doing. They gathered around their captain for a moment, as if in consultation, and then walked slowly toward the wharf. There was no shouting, no begging to be taken on board, as the mutineers had expected; but they stood looking at the sloop, as if the course her crew might see fit to follow did not interest them in the least.

"Ah ha, Harding!" shouted Rich, as the Swallow dashed by the wharf. "Who's captain now? I told you that you wouldn't make any thing by acting mean toward me. You may stay there now until you are captured, or get a chance to go back to Newport."

"Good-by, fellows," shouted Miller, waving his hat to the boys on the wharf. "You were afraid to trust Captain Rich, so we thought it best to leave you on shore, where you would be safe."

None of Johnny's friends made any reply, for they were well aware that remonstrance would be useless. They knew that Rich always took a fiendish pleasure in revenging an injury, and, knowing that he deemed himself insulted, as well as abused, by being relieved of the command, they did not think it at all probable that he would allow so good an opportunity to punish them for what they had done slip by unimproved. They were not at all surprised at the action he had taken. Their only wonder was, that they had been foolish enough to trust him.

At this moment, the sloop rounded a point at the entrance of the harbor, and a sight met the gaze of her crew that astonished and alarmed them. Coming straight into the bay, at full speed, was one of Mr. Newcombe's fast tugs, and so close was she to the run-

aways, that all attempts at escape seemed useless. The Swallow was caught at last. So thought Captain Rich, and so thought the boys on the wharf, who could not refrain from shouting with delight when they discovered that the voyage, which their treacherous companions had expected to enjoy, was likely to be brought to a speedy termination. The forecastle of the tug was crowded with students, and, among them, the deserters saw the lieutenant-colonel. The captain of the tug was at the wheel, and, as soon as he discovered the sloop, he rang the bell to "stop," and then to "back," at the same time turning the steamer's bow toward the Swallow, as if it was his intention to run along-side of her.

"How are you, Newcombe?" exclaimed the colonel, flourishing a paper which was, doubtless, his "warrant" for the apprehension of the deserters. "You, and the rest of your party, may consider yourselves prisoners."

Rich was desperate. The Swallow's capture seemed inevitable; and, had all the deserters been on board, it is probable that he would not have thought of escape. But he and his friends had seized the sloop with the intention of having a cruise on their own hook; and he thought how all the boys they had left behind would laugh at them if they failed! They would consider it conclusive evidence that Rich was not fit to be captain. While the latter was wondering what he should do, the tug continued to approach the sloop slowly, and presently a man stepped upon her bow and began to use a lead-line. This suggested an idea to Rich, and he was prompt to act upon it. When he first discovered the tug, he had thrown the sloop up into the wind, but now he filled away again, and, putting the helm down, ran across the

steamer's bows, almost grazing her as the Swallow went by.

"How are you now, Colonel Smith?" shouted Rich, as he shaped the sloop's course toward the beach, where he knew the tug could not follow her. "We'll not consider ourselves prisoners just yet, if you please."

"Hold on with that boat, Rich!" exclaimed the colonel, who began to be afraid that his prisoners might escape him after all. "We've got orders to take you back to the academy, and we intend to do it."

"All right!" replied Miller; "but it is always a good plan to catch your man before you hang him. Come on with your steamboat. We're ready for a race."

But the tug could not "come on." She followed the sloop as close to the shore as her captain dared to go, and then backed out into the middle of the bay. Here she stopped, and the Swallow's crew could see that her captain and the colonel were holding a council of war. Finally the bell rang again, and the tug went alongside the wharf, to take on the boys who had been left behind, and who, knowing that their cruise was at an end, surrendered at discretion.

"Didn't I fool them nicely?" exclaimed Captain Rich. "That was a sharp trick, I take it!"

"O, yes it was," drawled Tom; "but it won't do us any good. We're caught easy enough."

"Not yet," replied Miller. "We'll keep in close to the beach until night, and then we can give them the slip. We are not foolish enough to think of giving them a fair race; so we'll stay in shoal water, where they can't reach us."

Captain Rich approved this plan, and, undoubtedly,

it was the only one that could have been adopted under the circumstances. Tom then proposed that, in case they were successful in their attempts to evade their pursuers, they should return to Newport without waiting to be taken back; but the others would not listen to this. They were resolved that they would not go back to the village voluntarily, until they had had a two-weeks' cruise. If the principal desired their presence at the academy before that time, he must capture them.

"There comes the tug again!" said one of the crew, suddenly.

"And she's got three boats with her," drawled Tom. "I know it's all up with us now!"

When Captain Rich saw the boats that dragged at the stern of the tug, he was obliged to confess to himself that affairs looked rather dubius again. The Swallow was under the lee of the island, where she had just breeze enough to keep her moving through the water, but not enough to enable her to run away from the boats. He had been in hopes that the tug would blockade them until night, or that she might attempt to run in nearer to the beach and get aground, in which case he could easily effect his escape. He found, however, that he had to deal with those who were as smart as himself.

When the tug came abreast of the sloop, she stopped. The students manned the boats, and commenced pulling toward the Swallow, evidently with the intention of boarding her. The runaways watched these movements in alarm, and finally gathered about their captain, advising him to go along-side the tug and surrender, without any farther delay. The lieutenant-colonel, they

said, had authority from the principal to arrest them, and they would only get themselves into trouble by opposing him.

"I won't do it," said Rich, decidedly. "We can't be in any worse fix than we are now, and, as long as I see the least chance for escape, I'm going to hold out. When the colonel comes on board, we'll tell him that if he wants the ship, he can take her. He can't manage her, and I don't believe there's a boy on board who can. If we can only delay them until dark, we shall be all right."

But the runaways did not have an opportunity to put this plan into execution, for, as the boats approached, they discovered that one of them was under the charge of Mr. Hudson. This took all the backbone out of them, for, however much they might have felt disposed to refuse to yield obedience to the commands of the lieutenant-colonel, they did not dare to resist the teacher. So, when the boats came within speaking distance, and Mr. Hudson sternly ordered Rich to take the Swallow along-side the tug, he promptly obeyed. At this moment there was not one among the deserters who did not heartily wish that he had never had any thing to do with Tom Newcombe or his "grand idea." If they had all remained at the academy, even though they had failed in their examination, they would simply have been denied the privilege of going into camp with the others, but now they would be obliged to endure some terrible punishment. And it was the uncertainty of what that punishment would be, that troubled them more than any thing else. Had they been sure of a whipping, they would have

braced up their nerves, prepared to "take it like men," and congratulated themselves that it would soon be over with. But that was not the principal's way of dealing with such characters. He had a faculty of making a student, who had been guilty of misconduct, feel indescribably mean and little; and the runaways were certain that, theirs being an extraordinary case, something new would be invented for their express benefit.

"Newcombe, I wish I had never seen you, or heard of your society!" exclaimed Martin. "It's all your fault."

"O, now, it isn't, either," drawled Tom. "You are all just as much to blame as I am."

"I can't see it," said another. "If we once get out of this scrape, we'll steer clear of you in future."

By this time the runaways had been marched on board the tug, the sloop was manned by some of the crew of the steamer, who were detailed for that duty, and both vessels shaped their course toward Newport. Rich and his companions felt particularly sheepish. They could not look Johnny or his friends in the face, for they knew they had treated them in a way they would not like to have been treated themselves. Johnny, however, did not seem to feel very badly about it, for, as Rich stepped on board the tug, he said, with a laugh:

"Well, captain, your cruise didn't last long!"

"You deserters are not half the sailors I thought you were," said one of the students. "I hoped that you would lead us a long race. We have had a splendid time following you, and I had much rather spend my vacation at sea than in camp."

The students asked the runaways innumerable ques-

tions about the manner in which they had effected their escape from the academy; inquired how they had enjoyed themselves, and what had been the cause of the mutiny, (for Johnny had explained why he and his friends had been left on the wharf,) to all of which the deserters replied in as few words as possible. They were thinking of the court-martial, the guard-house, and extra duty, and did not feel at all inclined to talk.

On the following morning, the tug arrived at Newport. As soon as it became know that the runaways had been captured, the wharf was crowded with people, and the culprits found themselves the "observed of all observers." Tom saw his father standing on the wharf, but he felt so ashamed of what he had done, that he could not raise his eyes to his face. As soon as the tug had landed, Johnny Harding and his three friends made the best of their way homeward, while those that belonged to the institute were placed under arrest and marched through the village, like prisoners of war. When they arrived at the academy, they were met by the principal, who ordered them, not to the guard-house, but into the school-room, where the lessons of the day were pointed out to them, and in five minutes more the runaways were at work at their books, as if nothing had happened. On the second day, all the students who had been in pursuit of the deserters returned, and the work at the academy was resumed and carried on as usual. Three days after that, the examination was completed, and, when the result was announced, Tom had the satisfaction of seeing the eagles he had coveted placed on the shoulders of Bill Steele, the adjutant Colonel Smith, and a few of the older students, had

finished the course at the academy, and were to enter college. As for Tom and his fellow-conspirators, they were left so far behind that they were heartily ashamed of themselves. The next day, the much-dreaded court-martial was convened. During the process of the examination, the part each of the students had borne in the conspiracy was brought to light, and the secret workings of the society of Night-hawks were developed. Then came the sentence. Tom, being the prime mover in the affair, was ordered to do "extra duty" for two months, and the others for one month. The grand commander drew a long breath of relief, for he was prepared for something terrible; but the others all looked blank, for they understood the meaning of the sentence.

When the business of the court had been concluded, the successful students made preparations for going into camp; and, in order that the runaways might know how much they had lost by their misconduct, they were permitted to witness their departure. The lieutenant-colonel, major, and adjutant had been provided with horses; and when the battalion, accompanied by its baggage-train, moved out of the grounds, it looked like a little army on the march. As soon as it was out of sight, the runaways, and a few others who had failed in their exaninations, were ordered into the school-room, and Tom soon found that "extra duty" was something not to be despised. He was kept busy at work all the time; he was constantly under the eye of his teacher, who promptly took him to task for the least violation of the rules, and before a week had passed, he had been fully convinced that "the way of the transgressor is hard," and had made repeated resolutions, that as long

as he remained at the academy, the principal would never again have occasion to put him on "extra duty."

Here we will leave him for the present, working out the punishment brought on by his own misdeeds, and repenting, at his leisure, the folly of which he had been guilty, and go back to our old friend Bob Jennings, the fisher-boy, of whom we have for some time lost sight, but whom we have not forgotten. Of Bob's life and character, his trials, disappointments, and final success, we shall have something to say in "GO AHEAD; OR, THE FISHER-BOY'S MOTTO."

THE END.

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